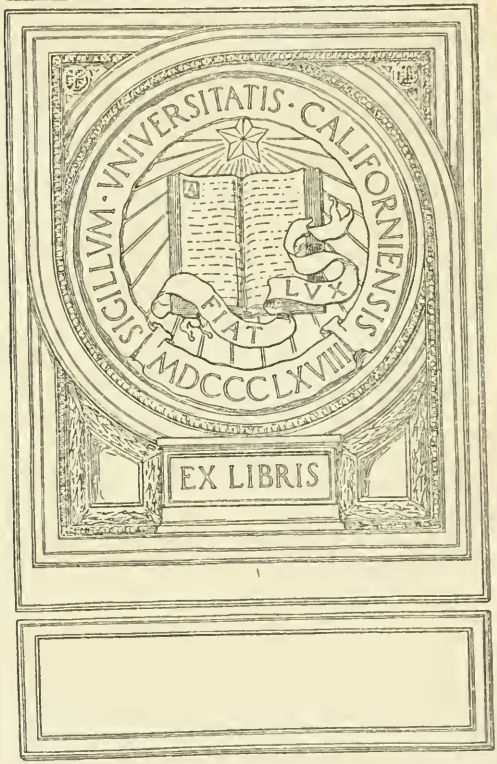
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



MEN AND RAILS

MEN AND RAILS

BY

ROWLAND KENNEY

T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

First Published in 1913

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

(*All Rights Reserved*)

FOREWORD

To Mr. A. G. Walkden and Mr. G. Lathan, of the Railway Clerks' Association; Mr. William Ball, assistant editor of the *Railway Review;* and Mr. W. G. Brown, N.U.R. organiser, I am indebted for much valuable assistance in the compilation of the facts presented in the following pages. Besides tendering my best thanks to the gentlemen here named, I must also express my gratitude to others who have helped me, but whose names it would be impolitic to mention.

ROWLAND KENNEY.

LONDON, *April*, 1913.

SEP 4 '42 HISTORY

415883

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reason for writing this book—Human element—Men before rails—Railwaymen a type distinct from other workers—Grades and sections—Their long apathy—The awakening—Learning the lesson of combination—The men's case to be stated . . . . . *pp.* 1—8

CHAPTER II

RAILWAY ORIGINS

Pioneers' difficulties—Vested interests and Parliament hostile—The landowner-legislator—Ridiculous restrictions—Bribery—Law costs—Canal companies' exactions — Parliamentary muddle and mess—The great railway boom—Bogus companies—The *Times* warnings—The crash—The indictment of Parliament—The theory of railway legislation—Competition impossible—Agreements and amalgamations—Waste of money and men . . *pp.* 9—29

CHAPTER III

HOURS

Mr. Francis Channing's motion in Parliament—A Committee appointed—Astounding evidence—Dangers from long hours—Companies opposed to reform—Memorials from men in favour of companies—Comments on same—The Hours Act of 1893—Also Act to protect witnesses—Tables of long hours in 1901-2-3—Complaints in 1907, the Act *permissive*—Present periodical returns — Companies' excuses — Companies' hypocrisy—Efficient organisation of adequate staff required . . . . . *pp.* 30—47

CHAPTER IV

WAGES

Union census of wages for 1907—Tables of percentages—One hundred thousand men at £1 a week or less—Overtime rates—The various grades examined—Pay of men in each grade—Companies deny validity of census—*Railway News*' defence of the companies—An engine driver's case—His subsequent discharge—The "Capel Pownall" circular—Railwaymen's "deliberate mis-statements"—The census reviewed—The Government census—The Government tables—Men's figures substantiated—Cost of living—Railway clerks' family budgets—The *Times*

investigation—Decline in purchasing-power of money—Food prices increasing. . *pp.* 48—77

CHAPTER V

KILLED AND MAIMED

The " Richardson case "—Safety rules broken continually—Men held responsible—Cases cited—Capstan work—Its many dangers—Rules anent capstan work—How I broke the rules—Shunters' risks—A case in point—Killed and injured in 1912—Fraudulent company reports—Extended basis for reports in 1895—Consequent doubling of total reported injured—" Killed " and " dead "—The 1870 Royal Commission—Passengers only considered—Railway pull on Parliament — Continuous brakes — Captain Tyler's report of 1875—" Means and appliances " wanted to save life—Mr. Asquith's " grip over railways "—Note on " killed " and " dead "

pp. 78—103

CHAPTER VI

SHUNTERS' RISKS

The list of killed—Automatic couplings—Efforts to enforce them—The compulsory Bill of 1899—Smothered by railway interests — Previous attempts — The shunting-pole makeshift — United States' safety appliances—Prevention of Accidents Act—Companies render it almost

useless—The *Times* correspondence of 1906—The International Railway Congress — Sir Francis Marindin's demand for automatic couplings — Their value in America — The statistics — Effective American inspection — What of our Board of Trade? . . *pp.* 104—118

CHAPTER VII

OUR SUPINE BOARD OF TRADE

"Mammon's Victims"—The author on our Government department — "Friendly pressure" — Safety Appliances Committee—Members composing it—Its "work"—Either-side brakes—A friendly deal—Failure of couplings—The "cheapest coupling in the world"—Number of failures—Burking the question—Effective automatic couplings—Suggestions for a new Safety Appliances Committee—Its powers—Colonel Yorke's suggestions—Drastic legislation necessary . . . . . *pp.* 119—133

CHAPTER VIII

RAILWAY TRADE UNIONISM

First national union the A.S.R.S.—Previous efforts—Mr. Bassett Vincent and Mr. Michael Bass, M.P.—Their investigations—Help from the *Daily Telegraph*—Official history of the A.S.R.S.—The early troubles—An aggressive policy—The first strike—Resultant intimidation and repression—The grade notion . . *pp.* 134—150

CHAPTER IX

THREATS AND CONCILIATION

A glimmer of reason—The All Grades Movement—The programme—The companies combine—Increased dividends through increased unemployment—The *Railway News'* defence of the companies examined — " Recognition " — A chairman's testimony to its value—The companies refuse it—Their reasons—Lord Claud Hamilton states a case for the companies—" Discipline and efficiency "—Preparations for a strike—Mr. Richard Bell, M.P.—His leadership of the men—The strike ballot in favour—The strike not called—Mr. Lloyd George's conciliation scheme—The agitation ended for a time . . . . . *pp.* 151—176

CHAPTER X

THE STRIKE—AND RECONCILIATION

The national railway strike of 1911—General discontent—Unity among railwaymen's unions—The strike declared—The Government aid the companies — Cabinet offers a Royal Commission — Chaos — Mr. Asquith's blunder — Mr. Churchill's military display—A damning indictment of the Government—P. W. W.—The politicians' attitude to public questions—Home Office fabrications—The strike settlement—

"Men beaten"—A "Committee of Inquiry" appointed—Men return to work . *pp.* 177—197

CHAPTER XI

A ROYAL COMMISSION—AND MORE CONCILIATION

The Commissioners—The impartial chairman—Their terms of reference—A review of the past—The companies' violation of agreements—The 1907 Conciliation Boards—Companies' delay in setting them up—The companies to interpret the awards—Evading the payment of concessions awarded—The engine drivers' complaints — Recognition again — The Commissioners' report—Recognition not conceded—Conciliation scheme merely improved—Men refuse to accept it—Another ballot for a strike — Parliament demands another meeting between companies and men—Scheme modified—Accepted by men's leaders—The present position—Varying opinions of value of conciliation—How the scheme works—The impartial chairman again—The companies' attitude—The men must not be allowed to unite—Conciliation develops sectionalism . . *pp.* 198—225

CHAPTER XII

OUR RAILWAY-RIDDEN GOVERNMENT

Railway rates—The Railways Bill—Its withdrawal—The Railways (No. 2) Bill—Government and

companies in collusion—Amendments not admitted *by the companies*—How the Bill was engineered through Parliament—Mr. Lloyd George's dictum—Minimum wage for men refused—Railway dividends—Railway capital and "water"—Facilities to increase railway rates will increase cost of living . *pp.* 226—242

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

Where will it end?—Demand for nationalisation—Monopoly inevitable—The Gladstone Act of 1844—Railway Nationalisation Society—Its proposed Bill—Terms of purchase—Useless railway directors—*Chambers's Journal* on superfluous officials—Objections to nationalisation—Our discredited Government cannot be trusted—A new proposal—Railwaymen to control the industry and the State to own it—The Nationalisation Society's Bill again—How to amend it—The National Guild of Railwaymen—Steps towards it—The Railway Clerks' Association—How this will affect the proposed change—A practical proposal for ending the present railway scandal . . . *pp.* 243—263

MEN AND RAILS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reason for writing this book—Human element—Men before rails—Railwaymen a type distinct from other workers—Grades and sections—Their long apathy—The awakening—Learning the lesson of combination—The men's case to be stated.

It is strange how one's past life is broken up into periods which, in many cases, seem to have not the remotest relationship one with another. But a still stranger thing is that the period considered during actual experience as the merest temporary platform from which to survey the last straight length of trodden path and meditate on the direction of the ground ahead often assumes an importance

out of all proportion to the length of time involved. The impressions are more lasting, the details of the daily round are clearer, the scars of the struggle, if struggle there has been, are never quite healed, and whenever anything occurs to arouse one to a remembrance of that fateful time, the sympathies are keener and the brain is more alert in its interest in the current event.

Of the twenty years spent in what is termed earning my own living I have passed about four as a railway worker. I have worked for three railway companies at about a dozen stations in capacities varying from that of stable boy to shunter. Not one of the positions when first taken was regarded as anything but a "put over" for a time, not one of them but held me for much longer than I had ever intended to stay, and from all of them I carried away a store of experiences, sensations and emotions which are as vivid to-day as the dominant interests of a week ago.

No other period affects my thoughts so

much. News of a railway disaster, a dispute between railway masters and men, or a piece of railway legislation still, by virtue of memories of ten or fifteen years ago, concerns me intimately and personally, and, above all else, report of good or ill luck to the railway worker is good or ill news for me.

That is my reason for writing this book: a desire to state the case for a more rational treatment of railway problems in the hope that it will lead to a more humane treatment of railwaymen. I have no intention of even attempting to produce a handbook dealing with all the complex issues and confusing statistics of railway finance—there are already numerous excellent treatises on the various material phases of the subject—my first, and last, concern is with the hundreds of thousands of human beings whose lives are bound up in the ruder and more solemn facts of the railway industry.

To the majority of people railway servants are uniformed nonentities who handle luggage and touch their caps in honest recognition of

their own humility or, on very rare occasions, they are a " mob " of strikers hastening the country to inevitable ruin, and sometimes they are the Great First Cause of a Government Report. To some of us they are none of those things—or more than all of them ; they are simple, big-hearted men who perform useful operations for which they are never adequately paid. They are one of the most conscientious classes in the community. For a ridiculously low wage they will face death or mutilation in many horrible forms before running the risk of damaging goods or passengers whose lives are to their masters sacred—that is, most of them will. Some of them are not angels. A few are but indifferent honest. There are fools in their ranks. Occasionally a number of them will act the part of Judas, but they will generally have the grace to be heartily ashamed of it.

I want to insist on this aspect of the railway problem. The human element has never been given due consideration. As in most huge industrial organisations, there are

latent forces of intellect and character in the railway service which are being wasted or driven into unseemly directions by harassing conditions and lack of the necessaries of modern life.

I do not suggest that railwaymen are better or worse, or more or less necessary, than any other section of the national labour forces, they are different, that is all. Railway work is unique and so specialised that the men engaged in it form a type distinct even among the working classes. That is probably why the public for so long evinced little interest in them. Miners, ironworkers, cotton operatives, and workers in many other industries have little difficulty in keeping the nation cognisant of their problems and difficulties. They are settled in large numbers in certain localities. They inherit or imbibe local traditions and become compact bodies like a brigade of soldiers. There is no mistaking a Wigan collier for a Bradford woolcomber, for instance, or an Oldham mill-hand for a Sheffield cutler. Daily intercourse with the

same type of people engaged in the same tasks may narrow the range of mental vision, but it enormously strengthens the common opinions and common demands and tends to make any demonstration or revolt more effective. Besides, in most industries the forms of labour are not so numerous and varied as on the railways. The spinners and cardroom workers in a cotton mill have a good knowledge of each other's work and can readily appreciate each other's difficulties and needs. The coal hewer and the haulier work together and continually meet in mutual enterprises, and there is little in the various parts of pit work that is not understood by all regular men engaged, no matter what their particular part of the work may be. On the other hand, railway workers are scattered in comparatively small numbers throughout the country. They are divided into numerous grades. Nearly every trade is represented and one trade or grade of workers may never come in contact with another. A goods porter may know no more about the engine drivers than

the man in the street. In thousands of cases men are transferred from place to place every few months and have never time to settle anywhere. They do not have the same advantages of social intercourse with their fellows as do other classes of workers, so that questions affecting their welfare are seldom discussed away from the cramping influence of their place of labour.

These are a few of the reasons why railwaymen were, for a long time, unable to get a class feeling and opinion strong enough to make any great impression on the general public. For long they were split up into warring sections which failed to realise the necessity for organisation and unity of purpose when fighting for improvements in their labour conditions. But a change has come over them during the past few years. A number of influences, such as the spread of education, the extended facilities for keeping in touch with the affairs of the day due to the greater prominence given to industrial matters in the press, and the consolidation of the forces

of capital have taught them the value of combined action.

And they have learned the lesson. There may be further bickerings and quarrels amongst them, some smouldering embers of resentment for real or imaginary breaches of faith may occasionally cause one set of men to refuse to help another, but they will be temporary ruptures merely and will only slightly affect the onward march of the main army in its conquest of fair wages, shorter hours, and reasonable safeguards against the innumerable dangers to which railwaymen are subject.

This being so it becomes imperative to state the case for the men, endeavouring to enlighten the public mind as to their condition and awaken the public conscience to a sense of its responsibility in the hope that immediate steps will be taken to deal in a rational manner with that wonderful anomaly, the British railway system.

CHAPTER II

RAILWAY ORIGINS

Pioneers' difficulties—Vested interests and Parliament hostile — The landowner - legislator — Ridiculous restrictions — Bribery — Law costs — Canal Companies' exactions—Parliamentary muddle and mess —The great railway boom—Bogus companies—The *Times'* warnings—The crash—The indictment of Parliament—The theory of railway legislation—Competition impossible—Agreements and amalgamations—Waste of money and men.

To the enquirer into railway affairs the most striking thing about the early days is the difficulty the pioneers had in establishing the industry. There seemed to be a gigantic conspiracy against common sense and the national welfare. First, there was the conservative element which refused to believe in the possibility of rivalling the stage coach and the canals. The inventor was discouraged and thwarted, his backers were looked upon as enemies of the commonweal, and his efforts

were alternately cursed and ridiculed. When some degree of confidence had been established in the minds of " men of substance," the land interests were in the way. Parliament at first took up an attitude which it is difficult to define ; one does not know whether to call it stupid or cowardly, but no matter how we define it, the effect was the same : It first handicapped the railway industry and then gave it free rein, with the inevitable result that a boom was created, to be followed by panic and slump.

When the dreams of the early inventors, such as Stephenson, had materialised into definite plans and concrete stock, property owners set up the usual wail of distress. Investors in other modes of transportation, notably canal shareholders, would be ruined in the interests of a few company promoters. Landowners objected to having their land spoiled by the new snorting monsters of steam. A few of them were honest in their objections, but the vast majority were actuated by the basest of motives. Their solicitude for the

felicities of nature soon resolved itself into terms of cash. The keener their objection to the destruction of natural beauties, the fiercer their denunciation of the vandals who were out for traffic revolution, and the higher rose the price of the land they had for sale. The landowner was not merely in the position of a monopolist who had an indispensable article to sell to the companies, he was also the legislator who could refuse to sanction the building of a railway at all. And refuse he would if he did not get his price.

Even when the landowners' greed had been sated, the difficulties were not over. Ridiculous restrictions were placed upon the companies. Thus a clause in the Act of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway provided that "No steam engine shall be set up in the township of Burtonwood or Winwick, and no locomotive shall be allowed to pass along the line within those townships which shall be considered by Thomas Lord Lilford or by the Rector of Winwick to be a nuisance or annoyance to them from the noise or smoke thereof."

Another instance, given by Mr. John Francis in his "History of the English Railways," 1851, is that of the London and Birmingham Railway. A century ago there was great industrial expansion in Birmingham and the surrounding districts. The population was rapidly increasing and trade was in a flourishing condition. The great handicap was the lack of transport facilities, the canal being the chief means used and far from effective. Continental traders were beating the Birmingham manufacturers out of the market. Goods were frequently lost, and the delay was such that orders had to be refused because it was found impossible to assure buyers that consignments could be delivered to date. A railway was therefore one of the factors vital to the continued industrial development of the district.

Under these circumstances the land interest might have been expected to do what it could for the new enterprise, instead of which exactly the opposite was the case. The company, which issued its first prospectus early

in 1832, found, when its Bill was laid before Parliament in the following month, that it was most mercilessly opposed, and on July 10th it was thrown out by the Lords. One witness of the proceedings stated that it was defeated "through the influence of a single peer, because it would approach a mansion he did not occupy. The noble proprietor and his friends did not attend to hear the evidence, they came only to the division and threw out the Bill."

This defeat was followed by the usual negotiations of the usual unsavoury nature. The opposition was removed by bribes—no word but "bribery" so aptly describes what took place—and finally the Bill received the Royal assent. Land estimated in value at £250,000 cost the company three times that amount. One landowner, in addition to getting £3,000 for a certain plot, extorted £10,000 for what he called "consequential damages," though instead of injuring the remainder of the property the line increased its value by 20 per cent.

The Great Western Railway suffered in the same way. The progress of the line was practically stopped until the proprietors of the soil had bled the company to the fullest possible extent. In the case of the Eastern Counties line, now the Great Eastern, one influential landowner extorted £120,000 for a piece of agricultural land worth about £5,000. Another company offered to build a tunnel so as to save certain landowners from having their property desecrated by the nearness of the accursed railway. "Give us the price of the tunnel—£50,000—and we will withdraw our opposition," then said the landowners. They got £30,000. Thus the great companies were all mulcted in huge sums for compensation to grasping landowners. The Brighton Company paid £8,000 per mile, the Great Western £6,696, and the London and Birmingham £6,300 per mile.

The tremendous expenditure on land did not cover the whole sums of money unremuneratively sunk in the first railways. The solicitors' bill for projecting and conducting

one utterly impracticable scheme, which never reached the House of Commons, amounted to £82,000. In a single session one barrister pocketed £38,000. Parliament also absorbed enormous amounts—one Act costing £436,226 to put through.

That there was good reason to look askance upon projects which would inevitably tend to form a transit monopoly one can readily understand. The nation had already suffered much at the hands of the water carriers. Their heavy tolls, their contempt for the traders, and the enormous dividends they enjoyed had roused a natural distrust and antagonism wherever transport facilities were concerned.

The canal magnates adopted an attitude when dealing with the railway pioneers which seems to indicate that they were the natural progenitors of present day railway magnates when these are dealing with their men. "They scouted the very notion of the smallest reduction (in rates)," writes one chronicler of the period; "they wallowed in their divi-

dends with a confidence that must always be impolitic and presumptuous." They had some dividends to wallow in too ! The Loughborough Navigation Canal shares originally cost £142 17*s.* each. In 1824 they had increased in price to £4,700 and were paying 200 per cent. dividend. Long after the canal boom of the last quarter of the eighteenth century was over the average dividend for six companies was 45 per cent. The principle of the public good was scoffed at by the canal proprietors, as it is always scoffed at—overtly or covertly—by prosperous concerns. The railway promoters naturally took what advantage was possible of the weakness of the canals, they were keen on the public good. "The promoters of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway scheme had a higher object than the mere accumulation of wealth."

Parliament was in its usual state of muddle and mess. The sense of acquiring the railways and organising them in the public interest at this juncture simply hit the

politicians in the face at every turn, but they took no notice, or, to use a Biblical phrase, they turned the other cheek.

To some extent the business of the country became disorganised. The coach proprietors found it unprofitable to carry the mails when once the trains began to rob them of their passenger traffic, and many districts suffered from the breakdown in the postal service. Gradually, however, some semblance of order was restored and the number of lines developed more or less efficient services; but this did not go on for long without a check.

As was natural, when the utility of railways was proved, speculators and shady company promoters got to work and many lines were projected. In January, 1845, sixteen new lines were registered, the two following months saw a further increase, and in April fifty-two additional companies were added to the number. And so the merry game of beggar my neighbour went on. The people went rail mad. The iron horse became an object

of public adoration, and money was poured out for the most ridiculous enterprises. A few men who could speak with authority uttered grave warnings from time to time; the investing public were told that railway property was in great danger of depreciation in value owing to the formation of unnecessary, competing lines; but the public went on investing, and the promoters of bogus companies went on raking in their money.

The swindling process was simple. An office was taken, a line was drawn anyhow across the map, and some fancy title chosen, men with "good names" sold their signatures as directors, and then advertisements were inserted in the papers. By devious methods, which would be hailed even to-day as "clever," the shares were worked up in value and then unloaded on to the public. To do them justice, the investors simply clamoured for the rogues to pick their pockets.

Landowners had by this time changed their tactics. Instead of opposing new

schemes, they became members of committees and paid themselves higher prices for the land they had to sell. Members of Parliament, it was positively asserted by Heropath, received huge sums as bribes. The *Athenæum* stated: "It is the fashion to assume that our legislators are not now open to pecuniary bribes. It may be so; but we must leave that question to be decided by our children's children. If public rumour be not more than usually scandalous and false, there are some curious revelations in store for these youngsters relating to railway Bills." One company openly boasted of being able to command 100 votes in the House of Commons.

With few exceptions the newspapers lent themselves to the swindle. The majority of the critics were bought off or their papers bought outright. Any and every form of opposition was met by bribes. Then came the crash. At the latter end of October, 1845, the bubble burst, and thousands were ruined. Peers, parsons, servants, clerks and

workmen—all classes of people had invested their capital or savings in the wild schemes of professional gamblers and adventurers, only to discover that the railway boom was a railway swindle.

The *Times* had for long pointed out the dangers and difficulties lying just ahead, and it now redoubled its energies. There were at the time forty-seven completed lines, 118 in course of construction, and 1,263 projected. Commenting on these facts, which it published, the *Times*, of November 17th, remarked: "With so fearful a testimony to the speculative madness of our countrymen as that which we this day display to our readers, we may apprehend almost anything. It may be said these 1,263 projects are nearly all smoke. But where there is smoke there is also fire. This luxuriant crop of absolute weeds affords an indication of the favour which merely unprofitable schemes have met with. It is the ridiculous amount of premium on worthless scrip, and the gullibility, or rather, the voracity, of the multitudes, which

have prompted a crowd of adventurers to bait their hooks and cast out their nets for prey."

The voracious prey, when it realised how it had been duped, turned on the promoters, directors and committee men, and the debtors' jail had a goodly company of these rogues; but in the majority of cases the biggest scoundrels came off best.

In the following year, a year late, of course, the attention of the Premier, Sir Robert Peel, was called to the condition of the money market, due to the railway gamble, and discussion was entered upon with the result that an Act was passed which did give some relief to pressed shareholders of worthless scrip. Later, under the authority of an Act "to facilitate the abandonment of railways and the dissolution of railway companies," 1,560 miles were abandoned, and 2,000 miles were abandoned without the sanction of Parliament. This dropping of 3,560 miles out of a total of 8,592 sanctioned in 1846–7 considerably relieved the situation. All these

things, wild and frantic as they seem, were recorded by John Francis over sixty years ago, and may be implicitly relied upon.

What of Parliament during this period? How did the politicians, those guardians of national welfare and national honour, cope with the difficulties of the situation and justify the trust reposed in them? Samuel Smiles, in his "Life of George Stephenson," says: "The course adopted by Parliament in dealing with the multitude of railway Bills applied for during the prevalence of the mania, was as irrational as it proved to be unfortunate. The want of foresight displayed by both Houses in obstructing the railway system so long as it was based upon sound commercial principles, was only equalled by the fatal facility with which they subsequently granted railway projects based on the wildest speculation. Parliament interposed no check, laid down no principle, furnished no guidance for the conduct of railway projectors, but left every

company to select its own locality, determine its own line, and fix its own gauge."

If anything in the world condemns Parliament of treachery to the nation, surely it is this question of the establishment of the railway industry. Here was a new invention, an invention rapidly proved to be of incalculable benefit and of unimaginable potentialities for the future welfare of the nation; and instead of organising it in the national interest the politicians of the day hampered its progress and handicapped it with weights which have borne heavily upon each succeeding generation of our people. The laws passed reveal an appalling amount of ignorance, stupidity and lack of principle. Nearly every man concerned seemed concerned solely with his own private ends. George Stephenson's son, Robert, speaking to the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1856 on railway legislation, said: "It is not so much the number of the statutes regarding railways that excites surprise. The extraordinary feature of the Parliamentary legislation and practice con-

sists in the anomalies, incongruities, irreconcilabilities and absurdities which pervade this mass of legislation. . . . The only way of escaping the difficulties of the position (regarding railway law) would be to sweep the whole from the statute book and legislate afresh."

The theory of all this early railway legislation—"theory," if one must dignify the jumble with a name—was that the railway industry should be developed on competitive principles. Parliament professed a desire and a determination to prevent the companies from gravitating into combinations which would ultimately become grasping and merciless monopolies. And Parliament failed. In spite of the new lines it continually sanctioned to compete with those in existence, the pressure of circumstances forced the companies to amalgamate or make other working arrangements which would eliminate the expense attendant upon extreme forms of competition.

So early as 1846 a committee was appointed

by the House of Commons to consider the proposed amalgamation between railway and canal companies. The first report of this committee was against giving general powers of amalgamation, but a subsequent report suggested that powers should not be absolutely refused. It was recommended that searching inquiries should be made and sanction given to the companies when it was proved that amalgamation would not be prejudicial to the public interest. Seven years later than this another committee recognised that, "In some shape or other ultimate combinations of interests will result from the temporary competition of railway companies." In 1864 thirteen large companies monopolised about three-fourths of the entire railway traffic of the Kingdom, whilst in 1872 the Joint Committee of Lords and Commons on Railway Amalgamation Bills reported: "That committees and commissions have for the last thirty years clung to one form of competition after another. It has nevertheless become more and more

evident that competition must fail to do for railways what it does for ordinary trade, and no means have yet been devised by which competition can be permanently maintained. In spite of the recommendations of these authorities, combinations and amalgamations have proceeded at the instance of the companies without check and almost without regulation. United systems now exist constituting, by their magnitude and their exclusive possession of whole districts, monopolies to which earlier authorities would have been most strongly opposed."

Thus the one outstanding feature of railway development has been the persistency of the companies in their endeavours to bring into existence that monopoly which at first was so strenuously condemned. Their success has been remarkable. In his "History of Inland Transport," Mr. Edwin Pratt points out that most—or all—of the big companies have absorbed other smaller lines which were formed to compete with them. The following table will give some idea of the

extent to which competition has thus been checked :—

Name of Companies.	Number of Companies Amalgamated or Lines Leased.
Great Eastern . . .	26
Great Western . . .	115
London and North Western .	59
Midland	35
North Eastern . . .	41

Commenting on these facts, Pratt says: "The process of amalgamation has been carried even further than these figures suggest, some of the companies absorbed into the great systems having themselves previously amalgamated a number of still smaller companies. The North Eastern, for example, came into existence in 1854, through a combination of three companies—the York, Newcastle and Berwick, the Leeds Northern, and the York and North Midland—while these three companies then represented between them what had been fifteen separate undertakings. Since 1854 the North Eastern has purchased or amalgamated thirty-eight

other companies, one of which, the Stockton and Darlington (absorbed in 1863), was already an amalgamation of eleven companies."

In 1899 Bradshaw's Manual continued the story of railway co-operation by publishing a special index of all the railways which had appeared in its pages during the previous sixty years. The total, including light railways, was 1,129. Of these 86 are recorded as having been abandoned, closed, or wound up, 110 are still in existence, leaving 933, all separately authorised concerns, which have been absorbed or taken over in some way or another by other undertakings.

Thus all down the years money has been frittered away on foolish competition followed by half-measures towards combination, on parliamentary lawyers and sharks, on grasping landlords and a host of parasites of every description. Even to-day, in spite of the continual movement towards unification, the idiotic lack of railway organisation and direction in certain matters is ludicrous.

And during all this time—whilst our "captains of industry," the "geniuses" who have been "developing the natural resources of the country" and perpetrating foolishnesses and crimes innumerable, for which they have received fabulous wealth and clinging titles—the companies have treated their servants as if they were cattle. Indeed, they have done worse; for many companies are noted for their fine, sleek, well-kept horses, whereas few of them have any reason whatever to be proud of the condition of their men.

CHAPTER III

HOURS

Mr. Francis Channing's motion in Parliament—A Committee appointed—Astounding evidence—Dangers from long hours—Companies opposed to reform—Memorials from men in favour of companies—Comments on same—The Hours Act of 1893—Also Act to protect witnesses—Tables of long hours in 1901–2–3—Complaints in 1907, the Act *permissive*—Present periodical returns—Companies' excuses—Companies' hypocrisy—Efficient organisation of adequate staff required.

On January 23rd, 1891, Mr. Francis Channing, M.P., moved in the House of Commons "That, in the opinion of this House, the excessive hours of labour imposed on railwaymen by the existing arrangements of the railway companies of the United Kingdom constitute a grave social injustice, and are a constant source of danger to the men themselves and the travelling public, and that it is expedient that the Board of Trade

should obtain powers by legislation to issue orders, where necessary, directing railway companies to limit the hours of work of special classes of their servants, and to make such a reasonable increase in any class of their servants as will obviate the necessity for overtime work."

The Tory Government of the day opposed the motion, and the usual method of delay was adopted: A select committee was appointed to investigate the matter. The evidence given before this committee was of an astounding character. In the case of engine drivers and firemen on the twelve principal lines in England and Wales, for the month of December, 1900, there were 263,369 instances of men working more than twelve-hour runs. That is for a total of 26,869 men. Now note this: The men's representatives asked for a ten-hour day. Sir George Findlay, representing the North Western, accepted ten hours as a fair standard and would have agreed that the companies should be compelled to relieve men after twelve hours.

Yet, of the instances quoted above, it was found on examination that no less than 46,658 occurred on the line he represented.

To illustrate these figures further, the number of hours regarded by Findlay as the maximum compatible with safety had been exceeded by each driver seven times during the month on the North Western, and various times on other lines up to the record of thirteen times on the Lancashire and Yorkshire. If the ten hours had been regarded as the basis for a safe limit, the number of times it was exceeded during the month ranged from twelve on the North Western to eighteen on the Great Western. These figures are for the largest companies, with their—presumably—larger and better organised staffs. The smaller companies were worse still, their figures running up to twenty-one instances during the month. Goods guards were only a degree better off than the drivers, and "on many lines there is a serious number of instances of signalmen working over twelve hours a day." These instances

relate only to the men engaged in dangerous operations connected with the movement of traffic. The figures relating to others, goods porters and the like, I cannot give.

One Board of Trade inspector, examined by the committee, quoted specific cases of fatal accidents due to engine drivers and their mates having "lumbered" after working for 16½ and 18¼ hours at a stretch. Another instance given by an inspector was that of a fog signaller who was cut up by a train after having been working for 23½ hours in a dense fog. But the worst case of all was that of James Choules, a goods guard, who was killed on the London and South Western "on a dark, stormy and rainy night . . . . He had been on duty for 22 hours 18 minutes consecutively." On 11 days out of the 24 previous to his death he had actually averaged 19 hours 11 minutes' work a day. "The excessive hours are not exceptional, but part of a regularly recurring and precisely calculated system." The table of five drivers on the Lancashire and York-

shire gave an average in January, 1891, of from nearly nineteen up to over twenty-one hours' work per day. One is tempted to wonder what would have become of those men if they had been rated at seven days to the week.

Sir George Findlay showed more consideration and sympathetic understanding than any of the rest of the companies' representatives, who were little moved by the revelations. Mr. Tennant, a director and previous general manager of the North Eastern, while not opposed to "united and practical" reforms, urged that it was practically impossible to get rid of overtime, and that it would be "prejudicial to the interests of the railway servants and the public, as well as to the companies, to do so." He explained that long hours were to a great extent more a nominal than a real strain on the men. Overtime was mere attendance, and was no actual strain on the faculties. He produced elaborate calculations as to the seconds of time actually taken up in such operations as pulling the levers in signal boxes, sending and receiving messages, and

the like. So far from long hours being responsible for accidents, it was the other way round. The fatalities on the North Eastern for the previous three years had all occurred when short days had been worked. The men were long-lived, healthy, and contented. And so on.

One of the strange anomalies of the companies' evidence was that, although some of their representatives blamed the fluctuating nature of the traffic for their inability to arrange reasonable hours, the representatives of the Lancashire and Yorkshire, which had a remarkably high record of overtime, explained that their difficulties were largely due to the congested nature of their traffic. They were almost unanimous on one point, and that was their solicitude for the employees; nearly everything that was done was in the men's interests. Some of the men themselves were apparently of the same opinion, for memorials were put forward, signed by a number of them, protesting against parliamentary interference.

The draft report of Francis Channing, who sat on the committee, is interesting on this point. "There is, without doubt, among many of the men a desire to earn more money by overtime ; but, as to the memorials, while some doubt was thrown on their spontaneity and genuineness, and while in some cases they seemed to have been signed under misunderstanding, it is perfectly plain that the real wish of the men was, to quote Mr. Findlay's words, 'that they should be permitted to continue so as to get home ; not that the men were in favour of working fifteen or sixteen hours continuously, because I am quite sure they were not.' Your committee have also noted that the men who, in their memorials, or in evidence before the committee, were strongest against interference, were just the men who had already got nearly all they want. Thus, the Great Eastern men have a ten-hours day, each day standing by itself, with time and a quarter overtime pay, while the Great Western witness, who did not object to fifteen hours provided he got home, was working on an average

ten hours, had no Sunday duty, and the risk of working fifteen hours might not occur even once a month. . . . These memorials and expressions of opinion go rather to show that the universal wish of the men for a fair day's work is, in some cases, qualified by other considerations than were meant as a justification of the maintenance of systematic long hours."

Evidence was brought forward to prove that the companies had already made improvements in train working and that hours had been somewhat reduced, obviously intended to show that they were doing all that could be done, but when the evidence was sifted, it was found that most of the reforms had come about since the resolution which resulted in the inquiry was moved in the House, or during the weeks immediately preceding, when a strike in Scotland had caused the press to take up the matter in the interests of the men. One Board of Trade inspector, Major Marindin, contended that "up to the present time, or nearly so, the

415883

railway companies have not been in earnest in trying to reduce working hours."

As a result of the disclosures an Act was passed in 1893, giving the Board of Trade certain powers to regulate hours on railways. This Act was considered as an excellent start, but in many quarters it was criticised because it did not lay down a definite schedule of hours to be worked by signalmen, guards, shunters, drivers and others employed in the more dangerous grades.

Another Act passed about the same time was one designed to protect witnesses who gave evidence against the companies. This arose out of the case of a station-master named John Hood, who cited certain instances of gross overwork on the Cambrian Line. When the directors of the company heard of this evidence they called him before them, severely questioned and subsequently discharged him. Such was the general indignation at their action, that the matter was specially reported to the House of Commons, and two of the directors and the general manager were

convicted of breach of privilege and ordered to appear at the Bar of the House to explain their conduct. After a full night's discussion they were admonished by the Speaker, acting on the instructions of the House.

Although the Hours Act had some beneficial effect, it did not check the evil to any very great extent. In 1902, nine years after the Act had been passed, the Board of Trade called for a return from the companies of the number of cases where men had worked continuously for more than twelve hours on a certain date—December 31st, 1901. From the returns sent in the following table was compiled :—

109,280	men	were	on	duty for 13	hours
58,062	,,	,,	,,	14	,,
20,937	,,	,,	,,	15	,,
13,296	,,	,,	,,	16	,,
6,557	,,	,,	,,	17	,,
8,087	,,	,,	,,	18	,, and over.

Making a total of 216,219 cases.

In this report there was also a summary of the number of instances of men who had worked overtime resuming duty without

having had a sufficient interval for rest. The number of these cases was 20,976, their period of resting ranging from one to eight hours.

The following year the Board of Trade called for a similar return, and the figures given this time were only about one-third of those for the previous year. The reason for this being that the Board of Trade warned the companies beforehand that the demand would be made, and the companies naturally saw to it that as few men as possible were kept on overtime on that date. That this is no unfair deduction was proved when another return was called for at the request of Mr. Richard Bell, M.P. He asked that the figures should be for a certain day in the month of October, 1903, instead of December, so that the companies would have no opportunity to arrange matters. Now October is a much quieter month than December. If there does happen to be the same volume of traffic, it is more easily dealt with. The fogs and snows and bad climatic conditions common to the latter month have not to be contended with.

Obviously the pressure is not so heavy and the work can be done in less time. Yet, when the figures for October were given, they showed an increase on the previous December's figures of about 30 per cent. Here is the table for the three dates :—

December, 1901, there were .	216,219 cases.
December, 1902 (after the companies were warned) . .	75,389 ,,
October, 1903 (a better period of the year)	99,506 ,,

The ordinary person would imagine that this evidence would have led to a complete cessation of overtime on the railways. Not a bit of it. The ordinary person has no conception of the arrogance saturating the railway official mind. Thus we find that, in spite of the revelations in the returns to the Board of Trade on the three occasions specified, the evil of long hours was kept on for a long time. In January, 1907, cases were reported of men working from eighteen to twenty-four hours' continuous duty. These were not isolated cases either ; whole gangs of men were worked at this rate in spite of repeated

complaints and, in some cases, urgent application for relief. On February 15th, 1907, the position was still so scandalous that the *Railway Review* characterised the 1893 Act as a failure. It stated: "For some years past every effort has been made to exploit the Act of 1903 to its full advantage, and yet it cannot be denied that if not a disastrous failure, the success which has been attained is comparatively slight, and the results are not commensurate with the efforts put forward. . . . Surely, even in the darkest days, the number of cases of 20, 21, 22, 23 and even up to 30 hours at a stretch have not been more numerous than they have been seen for two months past on certain railways, notably the Great Central, the Midland, and the Lancashire and Yorkshire. . . . It appears quite useless to supply lists of these hours to the Board of Trade. No permanent results accrue from that course. . . . The defects of the Act are fairly obvious. In the first place *the Act is permissive* . . . then again the onus of complaint is thrown on the men. It may

be done privately and without disclosure of the name of the complainant, or it may be done through the Trade Union. In either case it is not easy to conceal the source of the complaint, and suspicion often proves worse than actual participation. . . . If it were not for the possibility of sending through the Trade Union the Act would be to all intents and purposes a dead letter. . . . And last, but not least, there is the delay. The Board of Trade moves slowly. It takes months to get a simple complaint remedied. . . . In our opinion the Act of 1903 has had a fair trial and has proved a failure."

And not only were men still working long hours, but there were cases where they were deprived of their overtime pay. An instance is recorded of a driver on one of the largest lines who signed on for duty at 11 a.m. on February 23rd, 1907, and was not relieved for 24½ hours, although he applied for relief five times. And not content with that the company fined him a day and a half's pay at the end of the week because he had not applied

often enough for relief, and had not sent his mate—who was unacquainted with the road—a distance of three miles out and back with a special wire.

Early in 1907 the Board of Trade called for the first of the present series of periodical returns, giving the number of instances where men have been employed for more than twelve hours a day, and since then improvements have been made. The return deals with engine drivers, firemen, guards, brakesmen, signalmen and examiners, and the last report to hand gives for the month of June, 1912, but 1 per cent. of men working over the specified time. Of course, it must be remembered that this return only deals with the 112,313 servants of the class specified, and gives no idea whatever of the hours being worked by such men as goods porters, loaders, sheeters and the like.

Whenever the companies are pressed on this point, their excuse is that men are not to be obtained. When inspectors were appointed by the Board of Trade to visit certain

centres on the Midland to inquire into the reason why a large number of engine drivers, firemen and guards had been compelled to work from eighteen to thirty hours continuous duty, the reason given was that the staff had not been increased proportionate to the ever-growing volume of traffic. "I understand," reported one of the inspectors, "that it has been impossible to obtain all the additional men required by the company. The goods guards are recruited from the staff of under-guards and shunters, and they in turn are selected from the lower grades. Suitable men for the lower grades have been difficult to obtain. The good state of trade generally and the higher wages that can be earned in colliery and manufacturing districts have prevented men from accepting service with the Midland. Consequently it has not been possible to add to the staff of the goods guards to the fullest extent."

Apart from the admission that because of the low wages paid men for railway work could only be recruited when all other avenues

were closed, that statement is another piece of evidence as to the hypocrisy of the railway companies. For at the time that statement was presented the Midland was assuring the public that, in the event of a strike, there were so many men anxious to take up service with the company that there would be little difficulty in carrying on the work.

To revert to the returns of hours for a moment, another important point to note is the diversity in the number of cases between different lines. Whilst the men in the employ of one company may have little to complain of, the men on another line may be suffering a great deal. One instance will show what I mean. Of the 897 passenger engine drivers and firemen employed by the Lancashire and Yorkshire during the time specified, 272 or 30·32 per cent. were on duty on one or more occasions over twelve hours at a time, whilst of the 2,496 of the same class employed on the London and North Western but seven, or 1·28 per cent., were affected. On the London and North Western it is a punishable offence

for a man to work more than twelve hours, unless it is a sheer impossibility to get relief. Consequently it is only in extreme cases that overtime is worked.

The whole matter resolves itself into a question of the efficient organisation of an adequate staff.

CHAPTER IV

WAGES

Union census of wages for 1907—Tables of percentages—One hundred thousand men at £1 a week or less—Overtime rates—The various grades examined—Pay of men in each grade—Companies deny validity of census—*Railway News*' defence of the companies—An engine driver's case—His subsequent discharge—The "Capel Pownall" circular—Railwaymen's "deliberate mis-statements"—The census reviewed—The Government census—The Government tables—Men's figures substantiated—Cost of living—Railway clerks' family budgets—The *Times*' investigation—Decline in purchasing power of money—Food prices increasing.

Now that we have considered the question of long hours we can turn to the complementary question of wages for hours worked. This will necessitate the quotation of statistics of six years ago, as no detailed tables for a later period have been compiled.

In 1907 Mr. Richard Bell, M.P., prepared a census of wages relating to men eligible for membership of the A.S.R.S. Clerks, officials,

mechanics and the like were excluded. Of the possible 322,000 men covered by this scheme over 80 per cent. were accounted for. The result of the census was published in what was commonly known as the "Green Book," in January, 1908, but a preliminary statement was published in 1907 showing some of the general conclusions arrived at. The majority of the figures given were not seriously questioned, but there was one sentence in the preliminary notice which was condemned as a mere agitator's fabrication. This objectionable feature was a statement to the effect that 100,000 men on British railways were working for wages of £1 a week or less.

Before dealing with this question I will give the full table (see p. 50) :—

If we summarise that table in tens we find that it gives :—

100,930 men, or 38·8 per cent., working for 20*s.* or under.
128,810 ,, ,, 49·8 ,, ,, from 21*s.* to 30*s.*
29,540 ,, ,, 11·4 ,, ,, for 31*s.* and over.

Thus, besides the 100,000 at £1 a week

or less, nearly half the men concerned were working for 30*s.* a week or less. I particularly want you to note the 30*s.* section as well as the 20*s.* section, because I have something to say on that matter later. I must also

Wage Groups.	England and Wales.	Scotland.	Ireland.	Total.
Under 12*s.* per week	6,460	360	390	7,210
12*s.* to 15*s.*	11,560	1,270	3,380	16,210
16*s.* ,, 18*s.*	33,390	4,490	2,220	40,100
19*s.* and 20*s.*	29,920	6,840	650	37,410
21*s.* ,, 22*s.*	32,820	4,670	610	38,100
23*s.* to 25*s.*	44,320	4,920	570	49,810
26*s.* ,, 30*s.*	36,610	3,820	470	40,900
31*s.* ,, 33*s.*	8,400	740	120	9,260
34*s.* ,, 40*s.*	6,630	1,230	210	8,070
Over 40*s.*	11,580	350	280	12,210
	221,690	28,690	8,900	259,280

quote here a paragraph used in the Green Book when these figures were given in full: "It is unfortunate that the word 'men' was used in the previous publication, both on the chart and in the text, in referring to those whom the census included as a generic term

to include all employees of the male sex, without intending to infer that no boys were included, and it is a fair criticism, so far as it went, to point out that fact. . . ."

Leaving that for further comment, I will now go on to another matter directly bearing on the previous tables. In nearly all Government statistics relating to pay, the "earnings" are given, and these are frequently mistaken as standard rates though they may, and in the case of railwaymen especially they generally do, include a great amount of pay for overtime which should never have been put in. The figures so far quoted have been for standard rates of pay. Now here is a table showing the rate paid for overtime to the 259,280 employees whose standard rate we have seen :—

Rate of Pay for Overtime.	Number of Men (United Kingdom).	Per-centage.
No extra pay whatever .	16,190	7·5
Ordinary time rate . .	103,700	48·3
Time and a quarter .	85,110	39·7
Time and a half . .	8,790	4·1
Over time and a half .	880	·4

Number of men who gave no reply, 44,610.

From this table we get half the men employed overtime getting but ordinary rates or nothing, and it is pretty safe to say that these would be the men of the lower grades and consequently lowest wages, whose ordinary working day would be of ten or twelve hours' duration.

I have so far emphasised the lower rates, but I will now deal with the higher grades, taking locomotive men first.

The responsible position of engine driver is reached by three fairly clear stages. A youth commences as a cleaner in an engine shed. His duties are to clean and prepare engines for the road between trips. During the years he is thus employed he is taught the duties of a fireman, and on reaching eighteen or twenty years of age he becomes a "passed cleaner," filling up temporary vacancies as a fireman if required. When his turn comes and a permanent vacancy occurs, he is registered as a fireman and passed on to main line goods and passenger trains. He must then learn to drive, and,

after treading the intermediate steps of passed fireman, emergency driver, driver of locals and through goods, he (perhaps) attains to the high post of driver of passenger trains.

In quoting wage tables relating to this grade it must be remembered that the steps between the clearly defined grades of cleaners and firemen, and firemen and drivers, make it awkward to strike the average in any given quarter. A passed cleaner may be rated as fireman, or an emergency driver rated as fireman, and so on. But on investigation of the figures for a wide area, it was found that the averages arrived at in the Green Book were substantially correct. In the full tables the numbers are given of every set of men whose wages vary 1*s.*, but I shall merely give the two extremes and the average. To take cleaners first: of the total 14,276 the average weekly wage was 14*s.* 8*d.* Of this total there were 559 receiving less than 10*s.* and 470 receiving 19*s.* and over, the remainder varying between those two extremes. The average weekly wage of the 25,518 firemen

was 24*s*. There were 119 receiving less than 18*s*. per week and 52 receiving over 30*s*. The drivers are the best paid grade in what might be called the general railway working staff. Their average weekly wage was 38*s*. 10*d*. Of the total number of 25,991 there were twelve receiving over 48*s*. per week and 528 receiving under 30*s*. per week.

Of the passenger guards, goods guards, brakesmen and shunters I will only give the figures relating to the first named. They are the best paid of the four sections, but the difference is not great enough to dwell upon. Of the total 6,873 passenger guards there were 500 receiving 20*s*. or less a week, 346 receiving over 32*s*., and the average was 26*s*. 1*d*.

With regard to the signalmen the table covers both boys and men and ranges from under 10*s*. to over 36*s*. per week. Of the former there are 363 and of the latter 108. The total number of cases was 26,072. The average for boys was 10*s*. 7*d*., for men 23*s*. 11*d*., and the predominant rate was 24*s*.

To leave these higher grades and just mention one of the lower, the total number of platelayers was 37,870. The wages ranged from 12*s.* (all in Ireland) to 26*s.* per week, the average being 19*s.* 4*d.*

The publication of these figures centred a good deal of public interest upon the men's case. The companies questioned their validity. A section of the press ridiculed them, and the paper representing the companies, the *Railway News*, having acquired certain information, set out to demolish the men's position entirely. The advantages of the railway service were dwelt upon, statements were given as to the pay the men received and the hours they worked. So anxious was the *Railway News* to give the best defence possible for the companies, that it quoted the maximum standard of pay and the minimum number of hours as being general. Later the articles were republished as a pamphlet (The Red Book) which was distributed broadcast. Members of Parliament and other public men received a copy, and many newspapers justi-

fied their antagonism to the men's cause by quoting its statements. But it was not allowed a free run. Richard Bell showed the hollowness of most of its pretensions and riddled its so-called arguments. Other people also took up the case. A letter which appeared in the *Railway Review* is worth quoting.

"The picture put forward by the *Railway News* is to the uninitiated a very fascinating one, but those who have the stubborn facts of railway life to contend with know only too well how misleading the pictures drawn by the interested parties, who control the destinies of the *Railway News*, are. For instance, I am an engineman, having been in the employ of the London and North Western for thirty-seven years, and am stationed at Swansea. There are ten drivers and ten firemen in the link I am in. None of the firemen receive more than 3*s*. 6*d*. a day of ten hours, and the pay of the drivers varies from 5*s*. 6*d*. to 7*s*. per day of ten hours, according to the work they are on. From the 10th ult. to the 10th inst. I worked twenty-four days and

booked on and off on those twenty-four days no less than thirty times. At the end of twenty-four days I was 3 hours 10 minutes short of twenty-four days' work, notwithstanding the fact that I had booked on and off duty thirty times. For the week ending May 15th, 1907, I have worked as follows :—

Date.	Booked on Duty.	Booked off Duty.	Time made by Hour.	Time made by Trip.	Amount Earned.
			h. m.	h. m.	£ s. d.
May 9	4.45 p.m.	6.35 p.m.	1 50	—	0 0 11
,, 10	4.20 a.m.	9.50 a.m.	—	5 45	0 4 0
,, 11	1.45 p.m.	12.20 a.m.	10 45	—	0 5 10½
,, 13	8.50 a.m.	7.50 p.m.	11 0	—	0 6 0½
,, 14	5.30 a.m.	12.40 p.m.	—	7 30	0 5 0
,, 15	4.45 a.m.	1.20 p.m.	8 35	—	0 5 5
Total hours worked, 45 hours 25 mins.					£1 7 3

"My fireman worked 7 hours 15 minutes more than I did and will receive the magnificent sum of 15*s.* 4*d.* for such important work as firing on a locomotive. In Swansea you cannot get a four-roomed house for less than 8*s.* per week, you must be prepared with

at least two days' food every time you book on. Is it to be expected that men can have their minds free from care and worry, as they should have seeing the important nature of the work and the havoc to life and property that may be wrought by one moment's forgetfulness ? The railways state that they will not recognise the trade union, but are willing to receive their own men or deputations from them. (I must just mention here that this portion of the letter relates to a subject specially dealt with elsewhere, but it is worth giving in this place.) I for one know to my sorrow what that means. I happened to be secretary to the London and North Western Locomotivemen's movement in the early part of 1898, and on the recommendation of the late Lord Ritchie I sent to the company the men's programme, with the result that my promotion was and has been stopped from that day to this. . . . So far as my work is concerned, I defy anyone to truthfully charge me with the neglect of it or that I have not done it with credit to myself and in the best

interests of my employers; yet during the last nine years I have lost between £200 and £300 in wages, besides being humbugged about in every possible way, because I had the manliness to act as secretary of a movement. I have documentary evidence in my possession which will prove without a doubt that the much boasted opportunity of the men to meet the Board of Directors in connection with any grievance is a farce. I may add that up to the time I acted in the capacity of secretary of the London and North Western Locomotivemen's movement my promotion had gone on without interruption."

I have quoted that letter at length because of the sequel. It is impossible to read it and imagine that it is written by a man who was either ignorant, incompetent, or given to the needless stirring up of men against their employers. The honesty of the man who wrote it, the conviction that he had been unfairly treated and that his life had been spoiled because he acted according to the

best dictates of his nature, is palpable. It was signed " Joseph Thornhill," and appeared on May 31st, 1907. About the time he wrote this, Thornhill also wrote to a provincial paper stating certain facts. Now comes the sequel. In the *Railway Review* five months later an editorial paragraph appeared as follows :—

" Thornhill's Discharge.

" The discharge of Joseph Thornhill of Swansea, after thirty-seven years' service on the London and North Western Railway, for no ostensible reason, is one of those incidents which are not calculated to improve the relations between the men and the companies at this juncture. As we are not in possession of the whole of the facts at present we forbear further comments. . . ."

The manner of Thornhill's discharge was given by him at a meeting some time later. On October 7th he received a month's pay in lieu of notice. On asking why he was discharged after all those years and with a clean record, he was informed by letter that

the reasons were to be found in the statements made by him to the press. He then asked if the board questioned the veracity of his remarks, but he got no satisfactory answer.

The next time the reader of this record has occasion to travel to or from London by the London and North Western perhaps he will reflect on this matter of Thornhill's discharge when he passes the customary word of recognition to the Euston archway. If he cares to give his imagination a little play he may also meditate on the rapidity and the comfort of his journey and consider how many men's lives have been spoiled by such mental harassment as Thornhill endured, and how many common, vulgar working men's lives and limbs the London and North Western has sacrificed to ensure speed, safety and comfort to the passengers from whom a part of its revenue is derived.

Thornhill was discharged in 1907. His wages for a given week amounted to £1 7*s.* 3*d.* The average weekly wages of an engine driver throughout the United Kingdom during the

same year were, as we have already seen, 38*s.* 10*d.* According to Thornhill's letter the rate of wages on the Swansea link of the London and North Western was, for drivers, from 5*s.* 6*d.* to 7*s.* per day, for firemen, not more than 3*s.* 6*d.* per day. Now let me quote from "Our Iron Roads," by F. S. Williams, published in 1852: "Our engine drivers form so important a class, that it may be interesting to know something of the pecuniary compensation they receive for their labours. In giving the rate of wages of engine drivers and firemen, the arrangement of the London and North Western may be taken as an example." The rates given are, for drivers, from 5*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* per day, for firemen from 3*s.* to 4*s.* per day. Thus, the general rate on the London and North Western, which "may be taken as an example," was higher over sixty years ago than it was on the Swansea link six years ago.

Now I will leave the engine drivers for a time and return to the "100,930 men working

for 20*s.* per week or under." When the Green Book appeared, as I have already pointed out, it apologised for the preliminary notice which did not state that the term "men" should have been "male." It also pointed out that the returns were not complete, so that whilst in fairness it must admit that the A.S.R.S. had no definite proof, it was possible that "men" was the right term. In spite of this honourable statement a circular was published exactly four years later denouncing Richard Bell for having issued false tables relating to rates of wages. The circular was issued in January, 1912, signed "Capel Pownall" and headed, in heavy black type :—

"REPRINT OF THE CIRCULAR SENT BY MR. CAPEL POWNALL TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE METROPOLITAN RAILWAY. IT DEALS WITH MATTERS OF SUCH VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALL RAILWAY SHAREHOLDERS, THAT IT HAS BEEN DECIDED TO SEND COPIES TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE MORE IMPORTANT RAILWAYS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM."

The following is an abstract relating to hours of labour :—

"As one of the principal shareholders in the above railway, I will now undertake what should have been long ago the duty of the prominent railway authorities. It will now be my task to expose the falsity of the statement which contributed far more than any other to the actual strike (of August, 1911), which has been used subsequently as an attempt to justify the same, and is the parrot cry of the Trade Union officials in Parliament and throughout the country. The original statement made in 1907 in the 'Census of Wages' compiled by Mr. Richard Bell, late secretary of the trade union known as the 'Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants,' was as follows: There are over 100,000 employees on the railways of the United Kingdom whose standard wage does not exceed £1 per week." The number of railway employees in the United Kingdom, according to the last Board of Trade returns, is 608,754. Of these 43,584 are boys. Boys

ARE INCLUDED IN THESE 100,000 RAILWAY SERVANTS, BUT THEY ARE REFERRED TO AS "MEN" IN THE "CENSUS OF WAGES."

"If this were the result of carelessness the blunder would still be inexcusable. To the shame of the compiler and the trade union which sanctioned the production of this book the mis-statement proves to be deliberate, and THE OUTSIDE PUBLIC HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT MANY THOUSANDS OF MEN ARE RECEIVING THE WAGES OF BOYS. This is not the worst. In the course of the debate in the House of Commons, on November 22nd, 1911, Mr. J. H. Thomas—the organising secretary of the A.S.R.S.—exaggerated the existing mis-statement by saying that there were 100,000 *men* on the railways of the United Kingdom getting less than £1 a week. Even the 'Census of Wages' allows that out of the 100,000 men (and boys) referred to 19,000 *do* get £1 a week."

If we dispense with the trimmings of the above, and correct the "deliberate" mis-statements of which Richard Bell and the

A.S.R.S. ought to be ashamed, by adding the 43,584 boys to the 19,000 men who "*do* get £1 per week," we are left to infer that only 38,416 railwaymen in the United Kingdom were in receipt of less than £1 per week. Pownall has already told us that, according to the Board of Trade returns, there were 608,754 employees on the railways, so that—to Pownall, apparently—a mere 38 thousand out of 608 thousand is a matter of no importance. But before settling down in comfort—even if the former figures were correct—it must be remembered that the latter figure covers the whole staff employed on the railways. It includes general managers, superintendents, heads of departments, stationmasters, clerks, mechanics, and others who cannot be included in the A.S.R.S. scheme. As stated at the opening of this chapter, the number of men involved in the census was 322,000.

So far I have practically given the field to Capel Pownall. Now we will see what his case really amounts to. First then, under-

stand the A.S.R.S. census was compiled under tremendous difficulties. Men who had done a long day's work put in many hours when they should have been resting, to help prove their statements that they were underpaid and overworked. They had no organisation at their disposal such as the companies could command, they ran serious risk of punishment, and the success of their enterprise was remarkable. Another important point to note is that just at the period when the census was taken there was a tremendous agitation in favour of the men, and the companies were making some slight effort to improve the conditions of the lower grades. Understanding and appreciating these facts, you can now forget them for a time and attend to another phase of the subject which effectively ruins Capel Pownall's whole case.

In February, 1912, a month after the issue of the Pownall circular, the Board of Trade issued a report of the inquiry into the earnings and hours of railway employees. It gave details of the hours, weekly rates of wages,

and the actual earnings of over 400,000 railway workers during certain weeks in the year 1907. The departments covered included the coaching, goods, locomotive, engineering, stores, stationery and printing. Stationmasters, clerks and salaried officials were not included. The time taken in completing the return was four years, although the railway companies undertook the task of collecting and making a preliminary classification of the detailed figures to assist the Board of Trade officers in their investigations.

When the Green Book figures were issued, indignant denials were made on behalf of the companies, and when Mr. Sydney Webb repeated the statement anent the 100,000 at the opening of the new offices of the A.S.R.S. in 1910, Lord Claud Hamilton, chairman of the Great Eastern Railway, theatrically resigned from the Board of the London School of Economics, of which Sydney Webb was chairman of a staff committee, as a protest against the statement. Yet, when the companies' own figures were pub-

lished in the Board of Trade returns, they were remarkable for their similarity to those of the Green Book. The charges made by the A.S.R.S. were substantially correct.

The number of male time workers in the last pay week of October, 1907, who were in regular employment in the departments mentioned, was 401,437, of whom 365,901 were adults and 35,536 were boys. Their average rate of wages for a full week and average weekly earnings were as follows :

	Average Rate of Wages.	Average Actual Earnings.
Adult Workmen	24*s.* 4*d.*	26*s.* 8*d.*
Boys	11*s.* 3*d.*	11*s.* 11*d.*

The Green Book four years previous to this gave the following figures :

Number of Men Returned.	Average Rate of Wages.
259,284	23*s.* 2*d.*

Note that 23*s.* 2*d.* is average *Rate of Wages*. The average annual *earnings* of all workpeople (including pieceworkers and casual workers) as estimated from the total wages bill of the

railway companies for the year were nearly £65, or an average of 25*s.* per week.

The average weekly rates of wages (with and without bonus) and earnings of six-day workers in certain of the principal grades were as follows :—

Occupation.	Average Rates of Wages.		Average Actual Earnings.
	Without Bonus.	With Bonus.	
	s. *d.*	*s.* *d.*	*s.* *d.*
Engine drivers . .	40 0	40 3	45 11
Goods guards and brakesmen	28 2	28 2	31 2
Passenger guards . .	27 8	27 9	29 3
Signalmen . . .	24 8	25 4	27 6
Firemen . . .	23 9	23 10	27 5
Shunters . . .	23 8	23 9	25 7
Porters (goods) . .	20 0	20 9	21 10
Labourers (permanent-way). . . .	20 0	(No bonus)	21 8
Platelayers and packers.	19 5	19 5	21 2
Porters (coaching and traffic) . . .	18 8	18 8	19 9

Another table gave the range of weekly rates of wages and showed the percentage

numbers of adult workmen whose rates of wages, exclusive of bonus (if any), fell within certain limits. It also gave the percentages to show the difference in rates of wages between towns according to population; but I shall merely give the totals, that is, for the United Kingdom.

ADULT WORKMEN.

Limits of Weekly Rates of Wages for Full Ordinary Time.	Percentage Numbers of Workpeople in the United Kingdom whose Rates of Wages (exclusive of bonus) in the last pay week of October, 1907, fell within the Wage Limits here given.
Under 15s.	1·7
15s. and under 20s.	24·2
20s. ,, 25s.	37·1
25s. ,, 30s.	17·7
30s. ,, 35s.	10·3
35s. ,, 40s.	3·5
40s. ,, 45s.	2·2
45s. ,, 50s.	2·8
50s. and above	0·5

Thus 25·9 per cent. of the *men* in the return numbered at 365,901 were actually paid wages of less than 20s. per week, and the statement that 100,000 railwaymen were paid less than 20s. a week, to give the worst possible case put forward by Pownall, was near enough

in the absence of a complete return to be justifiable. In the face of these figures, given by the most vociferous of the men's critics, compiled by the railway clearing house, and issued by the responsible Government of the country, what apology has Capel Pownall to make to the men whom he charged with deliberate lying ?

Just one further point with regard to this table. Including the 95,000 above mentioned there were 80·7 per cent., or 295,282 of the total number of 365,901 *adult* employees receiving *less* than 30*s.* as weekly rate of wages for full ordinary time.

So far for the actual wages, but what of the other factor governing the standard of livelihood for wage earners, the actual value of the money received ? Some time ago the Railway Clerks' Association published what is known as the " Purple " pamphlet, dealing with the general conditions of life among railway clerical workers. The special feature of this publication is the set of tables giving the actual amounts spent by certain members

of the association on necessary commodities. For instance, among the evidence submitted to the Midland when the association approached the company for higher salaries for the clerical staff was the family budget of a Midland clerk which showed that, for the same house and for the same quantities of fuel and foodstuffs, he paid in 1910 no less than 3*s.* 8¾*d.* a week more than in 1904. The various increases were :—

	s.	*d.*
Rent	0	3
Coal	0	8
Meat	1	0
Bread	0	7½
Butter	0	2¼
Sugar	0	1½
Cheese	0	1
Bacon	0	8
Flour	0	0½
Lard	0	1½
Rice	0	1
	3	10¼
Less Tea, 1*d.* Cocoa, ½*d.*	0	1½
	3	8¾

This budget was one of the thirty compiled

by married clerks employed by the Midland in various towns. Fifteen of the clerks were in receipt of £80 per year and all the others, except two who received less than £80, were receiving from £85 to £105 per year. The comment of the association on these figures —and it only requires a few moments' study of the purple pamphlet to convince any inquirer that the comment is a just one— was as follows : " The outstanding feature of these budgets was that the compilers of them were living on the bare subsistence level, and must have had considerable difficulty in making ends meet ; their salaries in every instance were utterly inadequate to supply the normal needs of themselves and their wives and children."

In another part of this invaluable pamphlet is an analysis of the weekly household budget of thirty-three average senior station clerks who were employed on the Lancashire and Yorkshire in seventeen principal towns in 1910. The analysis is too detailed for full quotation, so I will just give the summary :

Average number in family . .	4·24
Average salary per family . .	£1 9 6⅓
Average expenditure per family per week	£1 10 10⅔

An average weekly shortage of 1*s.* 4⅓*d.* per family.

In fifteen cases the income exactly meets the expenditure ; in six cases there are small balances to the good, the average being 1*s.* 0½*d.* per family, though 3*s.* 3½*d.* of this is in a budget which allows nothing for fresh meat ; and in the remaining twelve cases there are shortages amounting to 51*s.* 2*d.*, an average of 4*s.* 3¼*d.* per family, which is met by earnings from other sources, including those of wife and children.

Remember here that the average weekly salary of these clerks was nearly 30*s.*, that over 80 per cent. of the manual workers on British railways get less than 30*s.* per week, and then imagine the conditions of the scores of thousands of railwaymen who are working for less than £1 a week.

In November, 1911, the *Times* appointed a special commissioner to visit the principal

railway centres and investigate the causes of unrest. With reference to the increased cost of living he reported that, "Even in the most favourable cases, the purchasing power of a sovereign is now represented only to be equal to that of 17*s.* a decade ago." In every town he visited he found that rents had risen. The increase varied from 3*d.* a week in Leeds to 6*d.* in Derby, and 1*s.* in other towns. "In Birmingham 'decent' houses, it was stated, could not be had for less than 5*s.* 6*d.* to 7*s.*, but one might live in the slums for 3*s.* 6*d.*" In Southampton, 6*s.* to 8*s.* 6*d.* were the figures quoted. "These high rents, of course, are only paid with difficulty by men whose wages may be anything between 20*s.* and 30*s.* a week. So far as the lower grades are concerned, the situation may be summed up in a remark which was made to me at Cardiff. 'If a railwayman has no children to work for him, he can only live decently by taking in a lodger.' The lodger being often, no doubt, a young unmarried fellow-worker."

According to Board of Trade statistics

the general level of retail prices in London of twenty-three principal foodstuffs advanced 16·1 per cent. from 1895 to 1911, or, to restate the proposition in terms of cash, the purchasing power of a sovereign in general commodities in 1895 had declined to 17*s.* in 1911.

In the face of such facts as are here given, the admission that we have grown men in our chief industries receiving only 18*s.*, 19*s.*, or 20*s.* for a week's work, that the vast majority of the workers in such industries as the railway industry receive less than 30*s.* per week, and that from this section of the nation's manhood we must breed our future wealth producers, one is at a loss for a suitable name for the class which is supposed to control the destiny of the nation.

CHAPTER V

KILLED AND MAIMED

The "Richardson case"—Safety rules broken continually—Men held responsible—Cases cited—Capstan work—Its many dangers—Rules anent capstan work—How I broke the rules—Shunters' risks—A case in point—Killed and injured in 1912—Fraudulent company reports—Extended basis for reports in 1895—Consequent doubling of total reported injured—"Killed" and "dead"—The 1870 Royal Commission—Passengers only considered—Railway pull on Parliament—Continuous brakes—Captain Tyler's report of 1875—"Means and appliances" wanted to save life—Mr. Asquith's "grip over railways"—Note on "killed" and "dead."

In the early part of this year an incident occurred on the Midland which had the effect of focussing rather more public attention than usual upon railway dangers. A guard named Mr. Richardson was ordered by an inspector to break one of the company's rules by overloading his train; he refused and was

discharged. Whereupon the railwaymen's unions threatened to call a strike if Richardson were not reinstated and the men relieved of responsibility for accidents which might occur owing to rules being disregarded to suit the convenience of the company. After the usual bickerings the company agreed to these terms, undertaking to give written instructions when ordering men to act contrary to the regulations.

It was thus for the first time publicly announced that certain railway rules framed in the interests of public safety were sometimes disregarded, but the general and natural assumption was that this only happened in extreme cases. That was, and is, a mistake. Rules are constantly broken, and they will continue to be broken under present conditions. The men know this, the companies know it, and the Board of Trade knows it.

Not long ago a shunter was injured at Warrington in an accident attributed to a breach of the rules. After hearing the evidence the Board of Trade representative

stated: "It has been the practice at this place to disregard the rules. . . . The company should take immediate steps to correct this dangerous system of working."

There is one special point to note with regard to this matter. Every railway worker engaged in the manipulation of traffic must carry a book of rules and regulations. In the case of an accident the first thing the men are asked for is this precious book, and every effort is made to find out whether they did or did not act strictly in accordance with the instructions there laid down. At the time of the Richardson affair there was a signalman lying in gaol, awaiting his trial on a charge of manslaughter arising out of a fatal accident which occurred at Birmingham. On another occasion an engine driver was convicted on a charge of manslaughter and sentenced to eighteen months hard labour at Carlisle Assizes. He had obeyed instructions from a superior—instructions contrary to the rules—and had brought about a fatal smash in consequence. In his address to the jury the

judge directed them that the prisoner's having obeyed the foreman's order was no answer to the indictment.

Some years ago I was engaged in the most dangerous occupation there is on British railways, that of yard shunting by means of capstans (driven by hydraulic pressure) and hempen ropes. Last year one in eight capstanmen were killed or injured. The capstans are bell-shaped pieces of metal about thirty inches high and thirty inches wide at the base. The whole of the mechanism is in a pit in the ground beneath, covered by a large iron plate. Iron studs project from the plate on two sides, and when one of these is pressed down by the capstanman's foot the capstan revolves at a tremendous speed. Coiled up behind each capstan is a long hempen rope with a hook at the end. To each capstanman is a "nipper," whose duty it is to drag the rope out, slip the hook into the axle guard of a wagon, uncouple this wagon from the rest if necessary, and warn the capstanman when he is ready for a move. The capstanman then

laps his end of the rope three or four times round the capstan, presses down the starting stud, the capstan begins to revolve, slowly at first but rapidly gaining speed, the rope is pulled taut, grips, and the wagon is on the move. At given distances on each line are turntables for transferring wagons from one line to another. As soon as the wagon is fairly on the table the nipper scotches or brakes it, lifts up the catch of the table, the capstanman jerks the rope, the table lumbers round and the wagon is turned ready for sending along the crossing to be placed elsewhere.

In winter the work of a North Sea fisherman can give points, so far as comfort is concerned, to outdoor capstan work. The tables freeze and will not turn properly, the wagons continually leave the metals, the lines become clogged with snow and ice, the ropes are stiff and heavy and swell to the thickness of a man's arm, nearly breaking the capstanman's wrist when bending them. The capstans break down owing to the extra strain put

upon them. Salt has to be thrown about to thaw the frozen tables and catches, the frost cracks the men's hands and fingers and the salt works into the cracks, causing intense pain. The capstanmen become ill-tempered and reckless and the nippers frightened or careless.

The dangers attendant upon the work, both to those actually engaged in it and to others working in the vicinity, are numerous. The hook may break and come banging with great force against the capstan—or capstan-man ; the nipper may be late in jumping and get caught between the wagon and the rope, or struck by the swinging buffers as the wagon turns. But one of the greatest sources of danger is when the rope gets worn and frayed so that the bottom laps grip the rough edges or ravels of the upper instead of letting them run off through the capstanman's hand to be coiled up behind the capstan. If, in addition to a bad rope, the capstan happens to be loose in its bearing so that it does not stop when the starting stud is released, there

is pretty certain to be trouble, for as soon as the hook drops from the wagon, the rope coils in a hopeless tangle round the capstan, the capstan gains greater speed, and the hook swings round and round at a terrific rate. Anyone within reach of the swinging hook of a runaway capstan is lucky to escape with nothing worse than a broken limb. In our yard a nipper was once caught and knocked to pieces in this way.

Of course we had rules to regulate our work and prevent us from running needless risks. The nippers must not go between buffers, shunting poles must be used for coupling and uncoupling, every wagon must be effectively scotched before being swung round on the turntable, capstanmen were not to use ravelled or frayed ropes or ropes with knots, no wagon was to be moved until everyone in the vicinity had been warned, none but rated capstanmen were to touch the ropes—and dozens of other things. These were the rules. Excellent rules. But had I been unfortunate enough to kill a man during my period I should

certainly have been tried for manslaughter, for I paid no attention whatever to them. I broke the rules every day and all day. We had to accomplish a certain amount of work in a given time, and to do this it was impossible to keep them. And not only did the pressure of work militate against working in accordance with the regulations, but there were other reasons, such as the company's rage for economy. We would run any risk with a slightly frayed rope before asking for a new one, as "expenses must be cut down." Expenses *always* had to be cut down. Scotches we seldom saw, and seldom asked for them; they took up too much time. As for shunting poles, they were of no earthly use to our nippers. The shunting pole is a piece of ash of from five to seven feet in length, quite heavy enough for any grown man to handle; our nippers were youths of from thirteen to sixteen years old (wages 10*s.* a week), too small and weak to use them. I ordered my nipper to try the pole one day, and the first wagon he tackled nearly pulled

him under it. It is not often that anyone but a trained man handles the rope, but sometimes even this occurs. On one occasion a nipper was " buffered up " in our yard by another nipper who had been put on capstan work only a few days before to save full capstanman's wages. I could never get to know whether awkward questions were asked at the inquest, the local papers did not report any and I could find no reference to any in the coroner's report which I examined some time afterwards ; but that something was brought forward was evident from the reported remarks of two of the jurymen. When the foreman of the jury stated that the nipper had met his death accidentally, one of them cried, " No, no ! I think he has been killed by carelessness on the part of the company's officials." And another remarked that he thought " it would be better if the company employed men instead of boys to do this work."

It is trespassing on other chapters of this book to mention hours and wages, but it is

worth noting here that I have worked a capstan on a most dangerous crossing, part of the time in a blinding snowstorm, from six o'clock on Friday morning to two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, without a break except for meals. I was then getting 19*s.* for a week's work of seventy-two hours, and overtime paid for at ordinary time rate.

Mine was not an isolated case ; and just as these things were occurring in our grade other men had their own peculiar difficulties. Shunters, guards, drivers, platelayers and others are forced to take needless risks in numberless cases, endangering their own and other people's lives in the interests of working economy. Then there are ordinary accidents ; train collisions, coaches leaving the metals, boilers bursting, brakes failing to act, and the breaking of axles, wheels and couplings. In the five years previous to 1911 there were 430 permanent waymen killed and 714 injured. A large proportion of these deaths and injuries occur because the companies do not provide effective look-outs or take other precautionary

measures. In addition to the ordinary dangers due to the lack of safety appliances, the shunters run other risks, slight in themselves perhaps, but formidable in their frequency. They trip over exposed sleeper ends, point rods and handles, and signal wires, or on greasy metals; they have insufficient room to work between sidings and main lines, whilst accidents occur owing to sidings being badly lighted.

I remember a case of a siding lit only by an old paraffin lamp placed upon the top of a pole just level with a man's face. The only service it rendered was to blind anyone who came within two yards of it. It was a miserable nuisance, and had often been reported. One night a shunter, in trying to utilise what little light it gave, stepped under his train and had both legs cut off. For two hours that man lay in the snow, quite conscious and suffering agonies, fingering his bloody stumps and speculating as to the future of his children when he was dead. A mate of mine was fireman on the engine at the time,

and all the while they were waiting for the ambulance to arrive he sat there in the snow, wrapping his own coat round the injured man, easing his thirst by putting snow into his mouth, and telling him lies as to how soon he would be out of hospital.

After the inquest a mate of the deceased measured the place up and found that the radius of the light shed by the lamp was four yards. Had the place been effectively lit, the accident would never have occurred.

At Dowlais on November 18th, 1911, two colliers were killed and three seriously injured in a collision between a collier train and a light engine. After the inquiry the Board of Trade representative made *seven* "recommendations" as to the improvements required both in methods of working and in actual condition of the line. "In short, the whole place requires to be re-modelled, and the slackness at present exhibited in the working arrangements eliminated."

The official returns for 1912 gave 403 railway servants killed and 28,200 injured.

Those figures are compiled by the Board of Trade from the companies' own tables, and, terrible as they are, there is no doubt that they understate the case. The subordinate officials on some lines are aware that the lists of accidents are unwelcome at headquarters and, in their own interest, they are not above suppressing or modifying unpleasant details.

About 1870 a certain company was threatened with fines of £100 for each unreported death. The result was that the 110 accidents reported for the previous year increased to over 1,000 in the next return, and the 1874 return of 3,693 rose to 4,483 for 1875. Not long ago the officials at the Board of Trade, having puzzled over the slightness of the accident returns of a certain company, demanded further particulars, and the 300 accidents of the previous year increased to 600—50 per cent. had been unreported. Another instance of fraudulent reports on the part of some railways is disclosed in the returns from 1882 to 1892 inclusive. For a

part of that period there was an agitation for automatic couplings. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then President of the Board of Trade, was in favour of this particular safeguard and strove to get Parliament to compel the companies to adopt it. During his period of office the companies gradually reduced their shunting accident returns. When he left the reported accidents increased by 2,086 in five years, and it is extremely doubtful whether the officials realised how they were being " had " until their attention was drawn to the matter from outside. It needs but a slight consideration of these facts to justify the suspicious attitude adopted by some of us when considering railway returns. As the *Star* put it on February 3rd of this year in a leading article on " The Police and Motor-Bus Statistics " : " We have always cultivated a healthy scepticism with regard to the statistics presented by Government departments in regard to matters in which the interests of the public are opposed to those of some private trust or combine."

In 1895 Mr. Ritchie extended the basis upon which injuries to railway servants were to be reported (under the Act of 1871, *which still rules*, he could not deal with deaths), and in a single year the total number of accidents to workers increased nearly 70 per cent. In 1902, under the Ritchie conditions of 1895, there were 14,118 cases reported of killed and injured. In 1906 the conditions were again extended, this time by Mr. Lloyd George, with what result the following figures from 1901 to 1911 will show :

	Killed.	Injured.
1901	565	14,740
1902	476	13,642
1903	497	14,356
1904	448	14,408
1905	447	14,345
1906	493	16,332
1907	509	21,514
1908	432	24,181
1909	372	24,095
1910	420	25,137
1911	446	27,848
1912	403	28,200
Total for 12 years	5,508	238,798

This extended investigation has thus revealed more than double the number of accidents for 1912 as were reported for 1902. If the full records of accidents reported under Lloyd George's extension had been supplied for the previous four years, we should have had a total of about a quarter of a million railway servants killed or injured in the ten years ending December 31st, 1912. Even this horrible figure does not give the full extent of pain inflicted upon railway workers, for the Home Office, some years ago, declared to Parliament that in five years it had traced 2,802 shunting accidents connected with the movements of trains, *apart* from those which it handed over to the Board of Trade as occurring on railway lines.

One more point before leaving this question of inadequate returns. The Board of Trade requires any accident attended with loss of life to railway servants to be notified within twenty-four hours of the time of the accident. If a man lives some time after sustaining injuries, he has not necessarily been " killed,"

he is simply "dead"—a useful distinction when companies are compiling their returns.[1]

The first Royal Commission to inquire into the safety of railway working was appointed in 1870. Its terms of reference confined its investigations to passengers' risks only and left untouched those of railway workers. Their safety was left entirely to the benevolent disposition of railway directors and officials. One reason unblushingly given for doing nothing for railway employees was that, "If railways kill fifty men to-day they can get fifty more to-morrow at the same price," so the consideration of their dangers was left to another Royal Commission appointed twenty-nine years later. But there were other and obvious causes for this indifference to the workers' welfare. For a long time accidents to workers had not to be paid for by the companies. (Accidents to passengers *had*.) At the time of the first commission there were about 180 railway directors in one or the other of the two Houses of Parliament; nearly

[1] See note at end of chapter.

every member of the legislature was directly or indirectly interested in railway finance—some were railway shareholders, others were trustees or executors for estates in which railway shares appeared ; others again were barristers or lawyers either actually engaged in railway business or trying to get it.

Besides this there has always been a good deal of indirect influence brought to bear on behalf of passengers. Members of both Houses of Parliament, with their wives, families, friends, relatives, and their influential constituents have to travel by rail, and naturally they demand that travelling shall be comparatively safe. So that in all legislation directed to safeguarding life and limb on British railways, passengers' interests have been considered first, and, as often as possible, no other interests have been considered at all. But even in the case of passengers the companies have had to be kicked into taking the necessary steps.

Take the obviously necessary safeguard of continuous brakes for passenger trains. In the Board of Trade evidence before the Royal

Commission in 1899 it was stated that railways "took more than thirty years to find a suitable continuous brake; and even at the end of that period Parliament had to introduce legislation; and after the legislation had been introduced and passed, railways were unable to settle and decide on *one* form of brake, but applied to their stock the necessary paraphernalia to use *two* forms of brake."

In a book on "British Railways and Government Control," published in 1883, the author, one "Hercules," gives the history of this particular safeguard. There was first the simple wooden block and lever, later the lever had a screw to regulate it, then came the heavy brake van with specially powerful screw brakes. The first continuous brake consisted of "an iron rod placed longitudinally under each vehicle, and made continuous for the length of the train by a telescopic universal joint between each carriage. This rod, being turned round by the guard by means of his screw in the van and bevelled gearing, wound on it under each vehicle a chain which applied

the brake to every pair of wheels in the train." It could only be used in exceptional circumstances. The chain brake followed, and "of all the abominable contrivances for giving passengers unpleasant shocks and sensations, probably a chain brake is most alarming. . . . When the chain breaks, as it does according to the official returns at the rate of some fifty-five times a year, the brakes become immediately useless. . . . There is no better evidence of the fact that the Board of Trade exercise at the present a mere shadow of control over the railways of this country than the retention for so long a time, by a wealthy and powerful corporation, of a brake which has been so repeatedly condemned and reported against by the inspecting officers of the Board of Trade."

Automatic brakes, so called, were gradually adopted, most of them being ineffective, and, owing to the lack of uniformity, all of them were useless when the coaches of one company were run on to another company's line. The Board of Trade "control" in 1883 was a

subject for bitter jests among people interested in railway work, whilst "The position of the railway companies on the brake question is now one of simple expectancy. They are awaiting the time when it shall be compulsorily settled for them what brake shall be universally adopted. Each company meanwhile declares what it is pleased to call 'our standard brake' to be the only efficient one in use. Meanwhile the Board of Trade are piling up reports against the brakes of all the companies, and the public have—to wait."

In the Board of Trade report for 1875 appeared its first pronouncement of the urgent necessity of reducing risks. Captain Tyler, then inspecting officer of railways, called upon the companies to provide "means and appliances" to avoid accidents to both passengers and servants. The provision of improved couplings on both passenger and goods vehicles for the purpose of attaching and detaching them was asked for, and the report closed with an earnest appeal to railway

managers " to devote themselves to the sacred duty of promoting safety in the more dangerous branches of the service." Perhaps the most significant part of the report was the reason given for " appealing " to the companies to attend to their " sacred duty "—it was " because there is no other means for controlling the management of the various companies."

In the course of his reply to a deputation which waited upon him last year to ask for the nationalisation of railways, Mr. Asquith said : " The nation has from the first kept a tight parliamentary grip over railways, a grip which is not in the slightest degree likely to be relaxed." And we are given to understand that he was not in any way trying to be sarcastic or cynical. Year after year and generation after generation Parliament has permitted railway companies to exact a ghastly toll of killed and injured workmen instead of enforcing the simple safeguards which the exigencies of railway work demand. And it has done this willingly or wilfully, for

each individual member of Parliament has received periodical reports of the terrible conditions prevalent—reports which positively shrieked for that attention which they never received.

NOTE.

[This paragraph was written in April of the present year (1913). The following month the *New Statesman* published a leading article in which a similar statement was made. This, amongst other matters, brought a charge of inaccuracy and unfairness against the *New Statesman* from the leading English railway economist, Mr. W. M. Acworth. He asserted, on June 21st, that: "When the injured man lingers for, say, a few weeks, and then dies, his case is included in the list of fatal accidents." He then went on to say: "The Board of Trade receives, I am informed, the reports of coroners' inquests, and, therefore, they would transfer a non-fatal accident to the fatal list, even if the railway company failed to notify. The only exception is the case, which must be rare, where the injured person dies after the annual Accident Return is made up."

The following week, June 28th, appeared letters from Mr. T. A. Brockelbank and myself. The former dealt with the general dilatoriness of the Government in dealing with matters affecting loss of life and limbs in the railway industry, and then continued: "Now Mr. Acworth has reputation on railway matters, railway property, statistics, dividends, accounts, etc., all affecting

profits: He admits that the Act of 1871 remains unchanged which requires reports of deaths occurring within twenty-four hours of accident, as you rightly stated in your article. . . . Had he pursued this subject, the first thing he would have encountered is the form on which all railways have to make their returns of accidents to the Board of Trade, with its specific directions at the head of the columns as to reports of those dying within twenty-four hours of the accident. . . . Then Mr. Acworth, as a humane man and sympathetic investigator, would have further wanted to know what prevents a Board of Trade that is in real earnest from following up and recording in full the numerous deaths of railwaymen which most undoubtedly do occur, and of which the nation never hears a word. Then he might, as the writer did in the matter of coupling accidents, follow it up to discover that the deaths recorded in the ten returns ending December 31st, 1907, as only 160 were much nearer 600; and that if the truth could be obtained, as it is *the nation's right to have it*, and *the Board of Trade's duty to get it*, the 403 railway servants dead of 1912 would come out well over 1,000."

As it was upon Mr. Brockelbank's investigation and its results, and knowing that the law on the matter was as stated, that I made the assertion originally, I was interested to know what would be the reply of the Board of Trade when questioned on the matter. That reply I gave in my letter to the *New Statesman*. The letter read:—

"According to your original statement, the country does not know the real number of fatal accidents to

railway servants, as the Board of Trade regulations require that a fatal accident must be reported within twenty-four hours of its occurrence. In support of your statement you might have quoted the Order of the Board of Trade, dated December 21st, 1906, based on the Railway Regulation Act of 1871, which reads: 'All fatal accidents . . . to be reported by telegraph or otherwise within twenty-four hours after the occurrence of the accident. . . .' On the 17th inst. (June) Mr. Wardle put a question in Parliament on this very Act. He asked the President of the Board of Trade—

'whether, under the Regulation of Railways Act, 1871, section 6, and the Board of Trade Order of December 21st, 1906, provision is made for the transfer from the non-fatal to the fatal list of accidents in the case of death resulting after the accident is reported to the Board of Trade; and what period is allowed to elapse between the accident and death in recording such accident in the fatal or non-fatal list?'

To the real vital point of the question—whether provision is made for the transfer—no answer was given. Here is the reply from Mr. J. M. Robertson:

'Where an injury originally returned as non-fatal subsequently proves to be fatal, the accident is recorded as a fatal one if the death occurs before the issue of the annual figures—*i.e.*, within about three months after the end of the year in which the accident occurred.'

Which is worthy of Mr. John Burns. It means, 'You leave these things alone. We know our own business, don't we?' If Mr. Acworth, or anyone else, is satisfied with the above, then one can only ask why on earth the

Board of Trade is required to frame any rules at all. May I repeat your assertion, that the distinction between ' killed ' and ' dead ' *is* a useful one for the companies ? "

So there the matter stands. There is no law in existence to compel either the companies or the Board of Trade to transfer a fatally injured case from the non-fatal to the fatal list, if the injured man does not die within twenty-four hours of the accident. Mr. Brockelbank tells us that hundreds of cases have occurred where the transfer has not been made. The Board of Trade tells us the transfer is made.

Now we have seen how diligent (!) the Board of Trade is in attending to its duty with regard to broken couplings to either side brakes, to automatic couplings, and the safety of railway servants generally. In face of these facts, are we to believe that the Board of Trade goes out of its way to swell the list of fatal accidents against the companies when there is no legal power to compel it to do so ? I, for one, do not believe that, and for that reason I shall let this paragraph stand.]

CHAPTER VI

SHUNTERS' RISKS

The list of killed—Automatic couplings—Efforts to enforce them—The Compulsory Bill of 1899—Smothered by railway interests—Previous attempts—The shunting pole makeshift—United States' safety appliances—Prevention of Accidents Act—Companies render it almost useless—The *Times'* correspondence of 1906—The International Railway Congress—Sir Francis Marindin's demand for automatic couplings—Their value in America—The statistics—Effective American inspection—What of our Board of Trade?

In 1912 one shunter in every ten was killed or injured. For the past six years 45 per cent. of all accidents occurring during shunting operations have been due to either coupling or uncoupling vehicles, or braking, spragging, or chocking wheels. In 1875, when Captain Tyler called for automatic couplings, the percentage of shunting accidents due to these two operations was twenty-four. Thus, on

those very points to which he drew special attention in his appeal to railway managers to attend to their "sacred duty," the reported accidents have almost doubled.

Now, it is the custom for railway officials, and newspapers representing railway companies, to assert that there is no actual demand for automatic couplings, and that such appliances as have already been tested have failed to satisfy the investigators.

It is as well to remember at this point that every safeguard that is adopted—every safeguard, that is, which is in any way expensive and which could be dispensed with except as a means of lessening risks—has to be forced on to the companies. They never take any steps whatever to lessen risks unless it will pay or unless pressure is put upon them. Year after year, for over thirty years, railway workers engaged in the more dangerous traffic operations pleaded for these very safety appliances, regularly forwarding resolutions to successive Presidents of the Board of Trade and to members of both Houses of

Parliament. And all the time these same workers, who for years had no legal compensation for injuries due to lack of safety appliances, took upon themselves the care of their slain mates' orphans.

In 1899 the Railway Regulations Bill was brought forward by Mr. Ritchie. One of its clauses provided for the use on all companies' trains of "couplers for carriages and wagons coupling automatically by impact, and capable of being uncoupled without the necessity of men going between the end of the carriages or wagons to uncouple them." Then was manifested the companies' anxiety for their workers' safety. Private wagon owners waited upon Ritchie and asked for the withdrawal of the Bill, and a long plea appeared in the *Times*, signed by seven magnates representing the Railway Companies Association, also urging that it should be withdrawn. In the House of Commons the railway interests were so strong that the Bill was smothered and a Royal Commission appointed.

There were other attempts previous to this. In 1882 the A.S.R.S., seeing that the companies would not move in the matter, organised an exhibition of hand and automatic coupling appliances at Darlington. At the Inventions Exhibition held in London in 1885 there were between thirty and forty safety couplings. On March 29th, 1886, the A.S.R.S., with the cordial co-operation of the late Sir Charles Scotter, then manager and chairman of the London and South Western, again displayed twenty-seven manual and seven automatic couplers in Nine Elms goods yard. For rendering his invaluable assistance on this occasion Scotter was vehemently denounced by railway directors and others.

During this period Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was President of the Board of Trade, and only the limited powers of that department prevented him from compelling the companies to adopt automatic couplings. Owing to the general agitation on the question the companies decided that something must be done, so the shunting pole was officially adopted in

1887. This was supposed to obviate entirely the necessity for men going underneath the vehicles in shunting operations. But the shunting pole itself has proved a source of danger. Nearly every railway in the country has introduced couplings of short but very heavy links, so heavy indeed, that the poles frequently break, knocking the men's hands against or between the buffers. Besides this there are many men now working in traffic departments who suffer continual pain from internal strains and injuries due to broken or slipping poles. Further, when the pole breaks the man must frequently run the old risk of going beneath the wagons to couple or uncouple them.

In 1897, Mr. Fred. Maddison, M.P., began to ask awkward questions in the House of Commons on this subject, one or two other members did likewise, and London's first halfpenny paper, the *Echo*, published such damning records from the Government returns that the Board of Trade was at last driven to take some steps in the matter. So Sir Francis

Hopwood was sent to investigate the subject of safety appliances in the United States. His report confirmed all the statements (we will deal with them later) upon which the Board of Trade had been so persistently heckled, facts which it was its duty to know and act upon without having to wait for outsiders to bring them to its notice. The outcome of this report was Ritchie's Bill, which, as already stated, merely resulted in the appointment of a Royal Commission. The commissioners reported in 1900, and arising out of their report the Railway Employment (Prevention of Accidents) Act was passed. Clauses 2 and 3 of that Act read :

" Where the Board of Trade consider that avoidable danger to persons employed upon any railway (B) arises from any operation of railway service, whether that danger arises from anything done or omitted to be done by the railway company or any of its officers or servants, or from any want of proper appliances or plant, they may, subject to the provisions of this Act, after communicating

with the railway company, and giving them a reasonable opportunity of reducing or removing the danger or risk, make rules for that purpose.

"The Board of Trade may, by any rules made under this section, require amongst other matters the use of any plant or appliance which has been shown to the satisfaction of the Board of Trade to be calculated to reduce danger to persons employed on a railway, or the disuse of any plant or appliance which has been similarly shown to involve danger."

Whilst later clauses give the Board of Trade power to demand facilities for conducting experiments. Parliament thus placed in the hands of Presidents of the Board of Trade powers of control and facilities for testing and selecting appliances for the safeguarding of railway employees. But drastic action in the matter of enforcing safeguards was rendered impossible by the action of railway directors and others interested in railways. Working through the House of Commons, they succeeded, whilst the Bill was in Committee, in

rendering the original clauses which might have hampered them useless and nugatory.

For the first six years of that Act's existence repeated questions were asked in the House as to when the safety clauses were to be acted on, but only the most evasive replies were received. One minister made light of the demand for automatic couplings, callously remarking that as there would probably be a fortune for anyone who succeeded in inventing them, he intended to leave it to private enterprise to solve the question.

This departmental lethargy—or worse—lasted until 1906, when a most illuminating correspondence between Richard Bell, representing the employees, and Mr. W. Temple Franks, representing the companies, was published in the *Times*. In his opening letter, on March 1st, Bell pointed out that at the International Railway Congress, held at Washington in 1905, automatic couplings and records of their use or testing in almost every other country in the world were the subject of various resolutions, England alone having

to admit that it neither used them nor understood their use. The English representatives were allowed a clause in the final resolution to themselves. It ran: "The British representatives expressed the opinion that the system used in Great Britain and Ireland is at present satisfactory as regards rapidity of handling, as well as the safety of employees."

After the return of the delegates from this conference, the Railway Clearing House on August 25th, 1905, issued a notice to private wagon owners that an arrangement had been made by which "shackle and pin couplings are to be discarded as from December 31st, 1905, and to be replaced by three-link draw chains of the dimensions given in the standard specification for new wagons." This was to affect 700,000 wagons, but the day before it came into force another circular was issued which altered the standard specification of this three-link draw chain, affecting 1,500,000 wagons. The reason for this was that, owing to certain defects in the couplings, there were

frequent accidents due to wagons becoming uncoupled. As Richard Bell caustically remarked: "Here, then, we have it acknowledged that this vaunted system is the cause of frequent mishaps. They could be shown to number thousands a year, for except they occur in trains that have passed their signals not only are they rarely reported to headquarters, but the workers know that they may risk their own positions if their frequency was disclosed." The reason for these regulations of the companies, regulations to alter their "satisfactory system," be it marked, was one of economy; there was no question of lessening workers' risks, or they would not have been so readily made.

In his evidence given before the Royal Commission on Accidents in July, 1899, Sir Francis Marindin, for twenty-two years inspecting officer of the Board of Trade, supported the conclusion that numbers of deaths and injuries annually appearing under other headings in the returns are directly or indirectly due to the present coupling system,

but are not so revealed. Speaking on the urgent necessity for automatic couplings he said : " I say if such an apparatus is used as would act automatically it would not only reduce the accidents under this head to a minimum, but it would also have a good effect in reducing the number of accidents under other heads." The chairman, Lord James, then said : " That is a very important observation (that the only real remedy would be the provision of automatic couplings) and we take it of course that you make it with all the authority and responsibility attaching to your position ? " Marindin replied : " I think it would be the only absolute remedy."

As we have already seen, Francis Hopwood was sent to investigate the American system. It seems rather a queer idea to seek sentiment or humane feelings in American industry, but apparently it does exist there. Twenty years ago the United States Congress decided to make automatic couplings compulsory in America, where the sidings and shunting tracks were literally a shambles. In the first

seven years during which vehicles were being gradually equipped, annual coupling and uncoupling accidents were reduced by 45 per cent. In 1900 all vehicles not equipped according to the Act were ordered off the lines.

To quote "Mammon's Victims": "Between 1901 and 1907 the results were startling, occurring as they did during an immense increase in railroad rolling stock, when the new stock ordered in a single year amounted numerically to as much as the whole rolling stock in existence on the railways of the United Kingdom, and during the seven years 1901-7 was three times as great in weight and capacity alone as the whole present stock of engines, carriages, and wagons belonging to the railways and private wagon-owners of these islands. Not a single railroad vehicle owned by corporations, private persons, or manufacturers in the United States is brought into this account, which refers solely to railroad companies' stocks. Further, over 100,000 workers were

added to those previously employed in traffic, whilst traffic in goods and passengers increased 75 per cent., and in some cases was over 100 per cent. more than in 1901."

Now for the figures. In 1910 the Interstate Commerce Commission of Washington issued revised statistics dealing with the first sixteen years of the Act—from 1893 to 1909. In 1893 about 45 per cent. of all shunting accidents were due to coupling and uncoupling operations. Four years later, with but 59 per cent. of vehicles equipped with automatics, it had dropped to 39 per cent. Ten years later, in 1907, it had fallen to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; in 1908 to $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; and in 1909 to $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. During all that time, owing to the lack of other safety appliances, other kinds of accidents to traffic workers were increasing at a terrible rate, mounting step by step with the rising traffic. In 1900 these "other casualties" stood at 780 in 10,000 workers and reached 1,240 in 1908, whilst coupling and uncoupling accidents dropped—despite the continually increasing traffic—from 230

per 10,000 in 1900 to 110, or over 50 per cent., in 1908. Without safety appliances the rate of accidents practically increased as the traffic increased, and where identical safety appliances were compulsorily and universally applied, they not only immediately reduced accidents but continued to do so even when traffic increased.

In the 1910 report the chief inspector of safety appliances on railroads of the United States, a practical official of whom we have no counterpart in this country, tells also what effective inspection is doing there. "The improvement shown in 1910, not only in the increased number of cars inspected but in the lessening ratio of defects found, is very gratifying. . . . The average defects per 1,000 cars has decreased from 309·56 in 1905 to 65·33 during the past year." The tables with that report show that 119·75, or over one-third, of the defects were in the couplings in 1905, and that effective inspection and control had reduced them in 1910 to 13·07, or by no less than 90 per cent.

When is our purblind Board of Trade going to emulate the United States and as vigilantly supervise British railways? And when is it going to inform us, as completely as the United States reports inform the American public, of the exact state of the rolling stock of this country?

CHAPTER VII

OUR SUPINE BOARD OF TRADE

"Mammon's Victims"—The author on our Government department—"Friendly pressure"—Safety Appliances Committee — Members composing it — Its "work"—Either-side brakes—A friendly deal—Failure of couplings—The "cheapest coupling in the world"—Number of failures—Burking the question—Effective automatic couplings—Suggestions for a new Safety Appliances Committee—Its powers—Colonel Yorke's suggestions—Drastic legislation necessary.

I HAVE already had occasion to mention a small sixpenny booklet entitled "Mammon's Victims." In the course of his investigations into the long drawn-out list of casualties to all classes of workmen, the author of that invaluable book, Mr. T. A. Brockelbank, offers some pertinent remarks on the Government department which is supposed to control the conditions under which industry is carried

on in this country. "The control of British railways," he says, "is in the hands of Parliament, but the overpowering influence of railway companies in Parliament has for seventy years frustrated every attempt to institute control on a single point where the life and limbs of passengers or servants are concerned. The powers of the Board of Trade are mainly negative and non-mandatory. It can only 'advise' and 'recommend,' though it may prohibit certain existing things from being done. It has no jurisdiction to enforce entirely new conditions, unless such powers be expressly granted by Act of Parliament. Even then its action may be subject to the approval of the Railway and Canal Commissioners, as it is in the Act of 1900," which the railways have used to the full to frustrate Board of Trade action. The principal weapon in the Board of Trade armoury is "a little friendly pressure" or "personal coaxing." How this works out is thus illustrated: "It was brought to the knowledge of the Board of Trade officials that

there were many varying sets of rules of working for railway employees engaged in the most dangerous work of shunting. After *between three and four years* of 'friendly pressure' on the part of the Board of Trade, an identical set of rules was at last settled on. Now, whether they are rigidly enforced by the railway companies, only the shunters themselves can tell."

In the House of Commons on March 20th, 1906, it was announced that a Railway Employment Safety Appliances Committee had been formed to examine and, where necessary, to test appliances designed to diminish danger to railway employees. The committee consists of three members. The chairman is Colonel Yorke, until recently chief railway inspector to the Board of Trade, a most estimable gentleman, but one who has acquired the art of "friendly pressure" under at least six different presidents, four permanent secretaries, and four railway department secretaries of the Board of Trade. He has thus had most excellent opportunities to

become saturated with the traditional departmental method of delay, and has for long been in close touch with the companies whom he is to fight. For it must never be forgotten that any committee which seriously determines to impose safeguards upon British railway companies will have a terrible struggle before it. The second on the committee is Mr. Turnbull, Superintendent of the London and North Western, the very railway which showed up worst before the Royal Commission on accidents in 1899. The third member is Richard Bell, an excellent trade union organiser, but one who, all through his career, has shown himself particularly amenable to the "personal influence" and "friendly pressure" methods of the Board of Trade—the Government department which recently gave him a comfortable berth.

When preliminaries had been arranged, the committee called for either-side brake inventions, and examined a number of those important appliances both full size and in model form. A number of good ones were

tested and, after much cogitation, recommendations were made. That was all right, but when the Board of Trade appeared before the Railway and Canal Commissioners to apply for power to order the adoption of either-side brakes it was immediately confronted by the railway companies, who were determined to delay the adoption of these safeguards as long as possible. All the Board succeeded in doing was to obtain powers to order these appliances to be affixed on new wagons. What this new wagon impediment means may be gathered from this fact: In his evidence before the Royal Commission of 1899, Mr. Alfred Slater, then managing director of the Gloucester Carriage and Wagon Company, stated that a wagon was in his company's yard for repair at that moment which bore the *forty-year old* name-plate of the Great Western Railway.

Again the old game of "friendly pressure" was carried on until, in February, 1910, a rule was made by the Board of Trade ordering all wagons constructed after the expiration of

six months to be fitted with either-side brakes, and, within given periods, all other wagons were to be so fitted. Clause 3 of the rule, Prevention of Accidents Rule, 1910, gives the periods :

Ten years for wagons of companies or persons owning under 3,000 wagons. Fifteen years for wagons of companies or persons owning 3,000 and under 20,000 wagons. Twenty years for wagons of companies or persons owning 20,000 wagons and over.

The Board also intimated that the terms could be extended if " sufficient cause " was shown, and concluded : " According to the reports issued by the inspecting officers of railway accidents, a very large percentage are directly attributed to the non-provision of brakes on both sides of wagons, and we must not relax our efforts to get them adopted."—Sweet Souls !

Evidently the above rule is the outcome of another " friendly " deal between the great companies and the Board of Trade, for, obviously, the great companies get all the

advantages. The owner of a few wagons, possessing no works of his own and having but slight control over traffic, is to carry out the order by 1920, whilst the huge concerns, with their own wagon-works and every facility, are given until 1930—and longer, if they care to show " sufficient cause."

In 1899 a Royal Commission declared the question of safeguards was an urgent one. Eleven years later the companies responsible for the heaviest lists of deaths and casualties receive a gracious intimation that they have until 1930 in which to affix either-side brakes, and then each is permitted to adopt its own pattern.

Before 1930 hundreds of railway workers will be injured through existing brakes, but instead of demanding an identical either-side brake throughout the railway systems, the Board of Trade puts forward this rule, in every part of which railway influence is evident and the Board of Trade decision is lacking. " We must not relax our endeavours to get them adopted." Great God! Can

a Government department sink lower than that ?

On September 24th, 1912, in his report on a collision on the London and North Western due to the breaking of a coupling at Hest Bank, Lancashire, Yorke wrote that the number of reported failures of couplings for 1911 was 2,937 and " probably there were many more of which nothing was heard." 1,777 were cases of actual fracture, while the remainder were due to the couplings becoming detached through jumping off the draw-hooks. He therefore thought it would be well for the railway companies to look into the strength and design of the coupling that was in general use. The existing three-link coupling was, as far as he knew, only used in Great Britain, and even if a little more money were spent on it, it would still be " the cheapest coupling in the world." Until this report appeared the failures and general unreliability of existing couplings had been almost entirely ignored. And then—" the cheapest coupling in the world."

What on earth should a department charged with minimising risks to railway servants have to do with matters of price when considering safety appliances? However, it did ultimately discover that "probably there were many more" failures and breakages of which "nothing was heard." How many more its own figures will give some indication. For twenty-five years or so the Board of Trade rarely received more than four or five reports of such breakages in a year, until, at the beginning of this century, it asked for more. Then it got them. Between 1902 and 1905 inclusive it obtained 112 and, on applying a little more gentle pressure, between 1906 and 1911 it obtained 12,400. There are the simple facts: 25 becomes 112, and 112 becomes 12,400, and the Board of Trade comment thereon is "probably there were many more." Had the Board been in thorough earnest in 1901 and demanded the full total of failures and breakages of couplings throughout the kingdom, in docks, in shunting yards, on wayside sidings and manufacturing

premises, of all wagons with broken couplings and draw-hooks sent in for repair to wagon-works, the total for this century would have been far beyond one million; of that I am convinced. And I am further convinced that the Board of Trade deliberately refrains from obtaining this information because the full knowledge of the facts, if made public, would raise a demand for more drastic remedies than have yet been suggested.

For over half a century this ridiculous department, backed up by the Government of the country, has sheltered the railway companies in their annual slaughter and maiming of workmen, and to-day it is helping them to stave off inevitable reforms to the last possible moment, instead of earning the money which a generous and foolish public provides for its use.

Again and again the companies and their journals ridicule the demand for safeguards, and the responsible Government department takes no definite steps in the matter, though its own journals continually repeat such items

of information as the following from the *Commercial Intelligence*, January 22nd, 1913 : "The Cumberland Railway and Coal Company has been ordered by the Dominion Board of Railway Commissioners to equip its cars with automatic couplers and air brakes within eighteen *months*." (Canada.)

Further, the Board knows that not one automatic coupling has ever been adequately tested by it, and that the numerous inventors who have pleaded for proper tests for their appliances during the six years of the Safety Committee's existence have received the cold shoulder or been shown to the door. To claim, as the companies and their journals do claim and quote Government reports to justify them, that such appliances cannot be made effective is deliberate lying. I have seen drawings and photographs of dozens of inventions, many of which appear capable of wonderful development. There is one especially, to my mind the simplest and best of them all, the inventor of which is now a ruined man subsisting on a shunter's pay in

an almshouse, after having devoted a fortune and many years of his life in striving to lessen railway risks. And he, and many others like him, have been driven from pillar to post and hampered in every possible manner by railway companies, and also by responsible Government officials who are in receipt of public money which should be devoted to the very objects upon which inventors are even now spending their money, their talents, and their lives.

The Safety Appliances Committee, as at present constituted, is useless ; it should be abolished and a new one put in its place. I would suggest that a committee be formed with special powers to call for inventions for safety appliances, no limits, no direction or fixed condition for such appliances to be made. This committee to consist of nine members : four to represent railway employees, two to represent the companies, two to be independent mechanical engineers with no business connection whatever with the railway industry, and a chairman who has never taken an active

part in Board of Trade or any other Government work, and who has also no connection with the railway industry.

The committee should have powers to hire or purchase at least one hundred wagons and all other necessary stock and appliances for the fitting and testing of inventions, and every assistance should likewise be given to inventors. When the necessary appliances have been decided upon, the railways should be allowed one year in which to fit their stock with identical patterns. At the expiration of that period the American method should be adopted of ordering all stock not equipped according to requirements to be put out of working on a certain date.

In his memorandum on the question of automatic couplings on British railways, Inspector Yorke, after pointing out every conceivable objection and difficulty, concluded by offering two suggestions. The first related to the private wagon-owners who, in his opinion, would be the most difficult section to deal with. His method was to get rid of

private stock by "*enabling* the railway companies to purchase it." The second related to the financial problem. "The only way to meet the case would be to form (with the support of the State) a Trust, with power to raise the necessary capital, and pay interest thereon," to which the companies would be required to make an annual payment. He further remarks: "If automatic couplings are ever to be introduced in this country legislation of a drastic character will be necessary." It will. But let us have a full public statement of the actual conditions of British railway rolling stock, followed by an investigation and a frank report as to how those conditions could be improved, and the drastic legislation will surely follow.

We are surrounded by the most elaborate inventions the mind of man can conceive. We have motor cars of tremendous power and wonderful design, we have weapons of warfare terrible in their potentialities for destruction and of every degree of complexity and simplicity; we have aeroplanes, hydroplanes,

submarines, and the gods only know what is in store for us during the next few years in the way of weapons of war. And yet, in face of all these mechanical wonders upon which we annually spend millions and millions of pounds, our profiteers and politicians would have us believe that it is beyond the wit of man to devise a simple apparatus capable of automatically and effectively attaching one wagon to another.

CHAPTER VIII

RAILWAY TRADE UNIONISM

First national union, the A.S.R.S.—Previous efforts—Mr. Bassett Vincent and Mr. Michael Bass, M.P.—Their investigations—Help from the *Daily Telegraph*—Official history of the A.S.R.S.—The early troubles—An aggressive policy—The first strike—Resultant intimidation and repression—The grade notion.

It is practically impossible to give any detailed account of the conditions of railway workers in the early days of the industry. No doubt the men who obtained employment in the more skilled branches would have better pay and conditions than were prevalent at that time, and, after the first prejudice against the steam-driven engines had died down, the best men would be drawn into the service.

When the industry was established, the usual process of extracting the highest possible degree of energy for the lowest possible wage

the men would accept was entered upon, with the usual result, the men became discontented, and continual harassing conditions drove them to combine for mutual help and protection.

The success of a noted brewery firm was largely responsible for the formation and continued existence of the A.S.R.S. (Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants), the first national railway trade union and, until a few months ago, the largest and most influential body of railway trade unionists in the United Kingdom. But before the formation of the A.S.R.S. a number of sectional attempts had been made.

In 1865 Mr. Charles Bassett Vincent, a clerk in the Railway Clearing House, after carrying on a vigorous agitation, formed "The Railway Working Man's Provident Benefit Society." Its chief objects, as defined by its founder, were "to assist members out of employment, to defend them at law, also a sum in the event of a member being killed." Hours of labour and rates of pay were considered, and very soon the organisation had

to deal with a strike of a few of its members in Lancashire, a strike which was a lamentable failure.

In 1867 the companies, realising that the union was steadily growing and would have to be reckoned with, adopted the usual tactics of intimidating its members. The London and North Western and the Midland dismissed on the same day fifty of their best men—engine drivers, guards and signalmen—men who had put in from five to twenty-five years of excellent service, but who were known to be members of the new union. At the same time other men were threatened with dismissal, and so the union was smashed.

Three years after this Vincent was introduced to Mr. Michael Bass, M.P. for Derby, who had been making independent investigations into the conditions of labour on the railways, and after a long discussion Bass arranged to pay Vincent's expenses if he would undertake a tour of inquiry into the manner of working the men on the Midland, the London and North Western, and the North

Eastern Railways, in all of which companies Bass was a shareholder.

In his "History of Railway Trade Unionism" Vincent gives a slight account of his experiences. The startling statements he made at the time aroused considerable interest, but the press more than once expressed doubts as to their veracity. It was therefore suggested that the special commissioner of the *Daily Telegraph*, Mr. James Greenwood, should accompany Vincent for a time. For three months the two travelled together, and then in the *Daily Telegraph* of Tuesday, December 19th, 1871, Greenwood wrote that he had accompanied Vincent a few trips into the country just to see how railways were managed and conducted, and had travelled nearly a thousand miles. "I have made diligent inquiries at scores of stations, and sidings, and signal boxes, and, regarded from every point of view, it is a little short of miraculous that the entire railway system—for really, when matters come to be sifted, there is scarcely a pin to choose between one

company and another—it is marvellous that the entire system of working the lines has not long ago fallen to pieces by reason of its utter rottenness. It is an almost awful wonder, all things considered, that the record of railway accidents and loss of life has been so small. Where one disaster is chronicled . . . there should be at least ten. Nor is it due merely to chance that the railway travelling public have so luckily escaped, but rather to the praiseworthy pluck and perseverance of the thousands of poor fellows who, with a noble sense of the enormous trust imposed on them, have not permitted either abuse, tyranny, or oppression to impoverish their honesty or integrity. For this they deserve the respect of the public. . . . Had the men shown themselves as rash and indifferent to the recognised precaution for the safety of the public as their masters are, the tale of maimed and wounded would have been terrible indeed. . . . For a guard to be on duty ninety hours in a week is quite the ordinary or common thing. It is by no means rare that he is called on to

work 100 or even 120. He dares not rebel or remonstrate. A guard at Leeds told me, that having been at work eighteen hours, he was requested to take a train to London. The tired and sleepy man went to the superintendent and respectfully asked him how many hours he was expected to work? 'That's *our* business' was the official answer, 'You've got twenty-four hours in a day, like every other man, and they are all ours if we want you to work in them.' 'But why,' I asked, 'don't you apply at headquarters?'" The guard explained that that had been done, but the only satisfaction they had got was a threat of dismissal.

After having given specific cases he had inquired into of men working long hours—one case where a porter had to be sent with a brakesman to give him a "nudge" when he "dropped off" asleep—Greenwood wondered how the Christmas traveller would feel when he realised that his safety depended upon a "gaping, leaden-eyed, weary man hanging in a state of semi-sensibility over the brake, only kept from dropping down on to the floor by

friendly nudging on the part of the man expressly provided to keep him awake."

Before leaving the "Bass Crusade," I will give a further extract from Vincent's book: "On the Trent Valley main line, near Tamworth, on the London and North Western, through which the 'Limited' and Irish mails pass every night, there is a signal box plainly to be seen from the Midland which passes over the North Western. From sheer overwork and physical exhaustion the signalman—whose name was Evans—mistook the points, with the result that the Irish Mail was sent dashing into the river Trent. The driver and fireman were instantly killed, and also a Roman Catholic priest, beside other passengers. The carnage was horrible. The cause of this—may I say, moral murder—would never have been known and 'hushed up,' but Mr. Bass got to hear of it and came to the help of the terrified signalman and rendered him every comfort and support. That poor man had been on duty for SIXTY-EIGHT HOURS CONSECUTIVELY WITHOUT ONE MINUTE'S 'RELIEF.'

His state of strength was such as to make his wife's attendance necessary. She was with him in case he might be overpowered by fatigue and want of sleep. Finding it useless to deny the real facts of this dreadful case, the general manager of the North Western was obliged to admit its truthfulness."

During the whole of the time Vincent was engaged on these inquiries Bass was spending time and money in other directions. On February 3rd, 1872, he started and financed the *Railway Gazette* (now the *Railway Review*), and a month later the A.S.R.S. rules were registered. When he considered the *Gazette* on a safe footing, Bass sold it to the society ; when the society was in danger of financial shipwreck, he lent money to it ; when he found that the *Gazette's* position was not so secure as he had imagined, he rebought it for £1,000 more than he had received for it, and in various other ways he worked to keep the staggering organisation on its feet.

The official history of the A.S.R.S. by Mr. G. W. Alcock is an interesting document ; it

is also amusing in its way. The opening runs: "Mutual need was the parent of all industrial organisations, out of which our own was born. No combination among Labour ever chose a battle-ground so rank with abuses as was the one which the Amalgamated Society was generated to combat." Not a very happy way of phrasing it. A society generated to combat a battle-field, and that battle-field suffering from rank abuses, is a peculiarity, but certainly the society did have a stormy passage.

In its first year Londoners fought the provincials on the question of general secretary. The provinces wanted Vincent, Londoners preferred a Mr. Chapman. The claims of the rival factions were laid before Bass, who suggested that both should retire for the time being, that there should be a fresh nomination, a general meeting called, and a ballot of the members. His advice was acted upon and Chapman won. Vincent's name did not even go to the ballot. He swore that it had been sent in to the *Gazette* office, but

the editor was equally positive in his assertion that it had never been received.

Apart from that there was further discontent. Of the six men whose names had been sent in, the second on the list when the votes were counted was a Mr. John Graham, of Derby. According to the historian, had the voting not been rigged Graham would have beaten Chapman. So it went on. To quote again : " The first few years of the A.S.R.S. is a time of wonders. It is cabals, intrigues, confusion, chaos, hand is against hand, general well-being is checked, reform hangs in the balance, and divided counsels hinder effectiveness. Bass had always regarded Dr. Baxter Langley (a medical man out of practice, then president of the society) as an upstart, and Greenwood (then editor of the *Gazette*) knowing it, presumed he would find a backing, but it passed all the limits of journalistic courtesy when the editor accused him of ' using language such as is in vogue in Seven Dials,' whilst Langley at the *E.C.* detailed facts, and said ' Am I a liar or is Greenwood ? '

Such were the pleasantries of unity, but on June 8th Greenwood retired, after having refused to accept the notice previously given. Langley had threatened an action for libel. . . . Acute differences sprang up in the government itself. Langley and Chapman drifted apart; so far they had worked together. . . . They had been kept together by opponents in common, namely Vincent and Bass, but they now became divided; and after Langley had contested a bye-election at Greenwich and lost, his ardour for the society waned, and opposition between the two became more and more pronounced. Chapman knew nothing of finance, Bowles had in a limited way kept him straight. Chapman had a remarkable lack of grasping difficult situations. On a draymen's agitation arising in Manchester, which Langley did his best to avert, he asserted to the press that no strike would take place; but it did, and the rupture was complete. The president (Langley) issued a circular which contained about a dozen reasons why he was retiring. Chapman in

the meantime was, to put it mildly, becoming less efficient; the executive suspended him, the annual meeting reinstated him, deposed the executive, and put a provisional government in power."

Those passages might have been a little less mixed, but they do give some idea of the early troubles of the society. Its whole system of organisation, of government, and of finance was, to put it as nicely as possible, unbelievably loose. But order was gradually evolved. The Rev. Canon Jenkins became president after Langley resigned, and Chapman was followed by Mr. Fred. Evans as secretary. The appointment of Evans seems to have been the salvation of the society. He had a clearer idea as to its real functions and a better grasp of trade union principles than his predecessor. In 1879 a programme dealing with hours of labour, overtime and the like, was drawn up, and trade union principles and objects were more clearly enunciated.

For the next ten years there was not much startling in the railway trade union world.

Various movements were started, but nothing very serious occurred. Then things moved considerably. The report of the general secretary of the A.S.R.S. for 1890 was of special import. For the first time in its history the society had definitely launched out on an aggressive policy. No longer was it a mere benefit society. It was a militant industrial army which had just fought its first strike, and won.

Nearly the whole agitation of this period centred round the question of hours. The men's officials requested the directors to give interviews on the subject, and the directors declined. Definite demands were then put forward by the men ; these were also refused. In consequence of this a number of strikes were called and successfully fought out. The net gains in the districts where the struggles occurred are given as a sixty-hour week, a forty-eight-hour week for shunters in some busy goods yards, payment for Sunday duty to some grades classed at seven days to the week, and, in some cases, an advance in wages.

The chief interest of the A.S.R.S. report for this year, however, is the note of exultation, coupled with a vague doubtfulness and hesitancy, which runs through it. It is the note common to the young fighter who has just tasted the sweets of victory, but who has no illusions as to the strength of the enemy or the fierceness of the struggles ahead. The secretary's expression of abhorrence of the strike as a weapon, and his conviction that some more rational method of fighting should be indulged in, is fine and yet pathetic. He gives no indication as to the form the new method should take. If the companies refuse to concede reasonable terms after the men have proved their case, well, he simply throws the onus of responsibility for further conflicts on to the companies and leaves it at that. For years the men had repeatedly failed to obtain concessions by peaceful means. The companies had to be attacked before they would move. Every concession had had to be wrung from them, and it was obvious that, if further progress was to be made by the men,

the wringing process would have to be repeated. Why waste more time in argument or regret ?

In 1897 Mr. Frederic Harrison, of the London and North Western, unintentionally gave a fillip to the A.S.R.S. Fearing that the growing spirit of unionism among the men would lead to trouble for the company, he tried to crush it by the customary method. Officials were told off to ask the men if they would stand by the company or the society in the event of a strike. The answers were not all satisfactory. Some men declined to make a definite statement either way, others bluntly announced themselves for the society and were given notice of dismissal. " We claim the right," said Harrison, " to deal with our own servants as we think expedient." Happily " our servants " claimed the right to organise if they thought fit. The press and the public were with the men. The *Daily Chronicle* was especially vigorous in its attack on the company. In a leading article it stated : " Let no one henceforth suppose we have seriously advanced from the blind

centuries that have gone before. The servants of the London and North Western are to call their souls their own as little as any born-Thrall of Cedric the Saxon. 'We' think it expedient that signalmen should work till they are stupid with fatigue, and 'we' are sufficiently powerful to stop even the Board of Trade from seriously controlling our enlightened notions of expediency. Therefore 'we' will train men, or half-train emergency men, to take the place of 'our' skilled pilots of the iron road." Fortunately for the men private influences were brought to bear on Harrison, and they were reinstated.

During the next few years there was dissatisfaction all over the systems, but the lack of unity among the men prevented any effective steps being taken. Twelve years ago, when I was working in a goods yard in the north, concerted action by the men was unthinkable. This was due to what was then termed the "grade notion." The man in one of the higher grades was regarded as socially superior to a lower grade man. The goods

porter was looked upon as an inferior animal by the shunter ; the shunter was tolerated as a necessary evil by the goods guard, who had wild hopes that some time he would be able to look the passenger guard squarely in the eyes as a man and a brother of equal rank. The nippers, being wiser than we and too young to be snobs, gave us all an equal amount of "cheek," or treated us with profane contempt.

This refers to the question of trade union action, of course. When any accident or misfortune occurred which drew out the common sympathy of the men as men, the grade notion ceased to exist.

CHAPTER IX

THREATS AND CONCILIATION

A glimmer of reason—The All Grades Movement—The programme—The companies combine—Increased dividends through increased unemployment—The *Railway News*' defence of the companies examined —" Recognition "—A chairman's testimony to its value—The companies refuse it—Their reasons—Lord Claud Hamilton states a case for the companies—" Discipline and efficiency "—Preparations for a strike—Mr. Richard Bell, M.P.—His leadership of the men—The strike ballot in favour—The strike not called—Mr. Lloyd George's conciliation scheme—The agitation ended for a time.

In 1906 came a glimmer of reason and the All Grades Movement was started. The title sufficiently indicates where the previous weakness lay. On December 28th of that year the national programme was published. It was a formidable document, divided into three sections : England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The principal demands in the England and Wales section were :

An eight-hour day for all men concerned in the manipulation of traffic.

That ten hours be the maximum working day for all other classes of railwaymen.

That a minimum of rate and a quarter be paid for all time worked over the standard rate of hours, and rate and a half for all Sunday work.

An immediate advance of 2*s.* per week for all grades, except those included in the demand for an eight-hour day.

The Irish and Scottish sections were slightly different, but not sufficiently so to call for detailed notice. Besides the clauses relating directly to hours and wages, there were others dealing with such minor matters as temporary work, classification, tonnage and trip systems, and the like, but these were admitted to be matters for arrangement.

One of the reasons for the closer drawing together of the men at this particular time was the fact that the companies were actually putting into practice what the men's leaders were preaching. For some years there had

been a tendency to economise on the part of the companies, and these economies directly affected the employees. Larger engines and wagons were introduced. In 1903 there were locomotives performing double the work accomplished by the engines of three or four years before. The chairman of the London and North Western complimented the shareholders in 1903 on the fact that, comparing the first half of that year with the corresponding period during the year 1900, the company had saved upwards of 3,000,000 train miles in spite of a traffic increase of 1,700,000 tons. This was a source of great satisfaction to the companies, but it meant the loss of the means of livelihood to many of the workers.

About the same time that the national programme was published a paragraph appeared in the press pointing out that, as a result of several conferences, a scheme for the pooling of freights in Liverpool with the object of doing away with the wastage due to light loads and cross canvassing would be put into immediate operation. The agreement was to

apply to grain and timber, incomplete machinery and railway materials carried between Liverpool and all competitive stations on the lines of the signatory companies, the profits to be pooled proportionately. The affected companies were the London and North Western, the Lancashire and Yorkshire, the Great Western, the Midland, the Great Central, the Great Northern, the Cheshire Lines Committee, and the Great Central and Midland joint railways.

The dismissal of the men took place at once. Commenting on this matter, the *Railway Review* said: "What are the men going to do? That present methods are wasteful no one can deny, but is the remedy to be a huge private railway monopoly which has no consideration for the men employed, and no regard for anything but dividends, or a system of State railways with an eight-hour day all round to absorb the surplus men? It is for the employees to answer. The experiment will not end at Liverpool, and we invite the attention of the men to this problem,

which, following hard on the bigger engines and other labour-saving devices, threatens them in another and more serious way. Is it not time the national movement was taken up in earnest and the organisation perfected over the whole of the lines."

The experiment did not end at Liverpool, and the men evidently were considering the problem, for they pressed their claims more strongly than before. To such an extent was the national programme forced upon the attention of the public, that the *Railway News*, on behalf of the companies, was constrained to publish a series of articles attacking the men. (As stated elsewhere, these articles were afterwards reprinted in pamphlet form and widely distributed.) Its arguments were of a particularly specious nature, well designed to mislead anyone not acquainted with the practical side of the railwaymen's case. It painted in glowing colours the manifold advantages enjoyed by railway employees and denied to workers in other industries. They had free clothes, cheap travelling facili-

ties, and permanent employment. In dealing with the lower grades the idea that the work was worth more than was being paid for it was ridiculed. "In many grades the work is light and intermittent, requiring little skill and no great exertion, the difficulty being rather how to kill time than get through the work." As for the demands of the men, they were made to appear of tremendous magnitude. "A youth of eighteen or nineteen, often fresh from the plough, will have his wages increased forthwith by 7*s.* a week!"

The higher grades were not neglected. "It is not, however, in these inferior grades alone that railway work may be said to be unskilled, for even a driver, unless he happens to be also a mechanic, which he very rarely is, is of little or no use when off the footplate, even as a labourer. . . . Surely there never was an agitation so entirely unjustifiable as this."

Now I will just consider the above points as given. The value placed upon the free clothes is 1*s.* per week, which is absurdly high

in the majority of cases. The free clothes I have received in a year were not worth 15*s.* all told. The facilities for cheap travelling by means of privilege tickets—quarter fare or so—are of great value to the man employed seventy-two hours a week for 17*s.*! Why, he has never time to travel unless he goes for a ride in his sleep. With regard to permanency of employment. The balance-sheet of the London and North Western Superannuation Fund, published last year, gave the following facts: The total number of members since the commencement of the fund in 1854 was 26,676. Of these only 1,565 lived to receive any pension or grant in lieu, 10,086 were then contributing, and 13,491—*more than* 50 *per cent.*—had left the service.

In his official reply to the *Railway News* charges, Richard Bell gave an example of the light and intermittent work of the lower grades. A youth of eighteen years of age was paid 14*s.* a week as porter on a southern line. For this sum, in addition to his portering, he had to relieve a signal cabin, near which there

was a dangerous crossing with hand-gates, for four hours a day. During the four hours he had forty-five trains to deal with, besides extra goods, light wagons, empties, and so on. He had to take his turn at the box for twelve hours on Sundays, and his duties also included point cleaning and night watchman's work.

Apparently an increase of *7s.* a week for this youth, perhaps "fresh from the plough," would have utterly demoralised him. The ploughboy has done excellent service in illustrating the railway companies' case.

One of their stock arguments was that the men in the lower grades were recruited from agricultural districts where wages were sometimes as low as *12s.* a week, but they never told more than half the story. Now, I have worked with many of these agricultural labourers, these ploughboys to whom the wage of a goods porter or carman meant prosperity. They started at a very low rate at some country station. The lightness of the work, and the certainty of promotion, with consequent large increases of salary, were the

baits which had lured them from the fields. When they were drafted into a large industrial town or city they found that the money they received was not quite the magnificent sum previously imagined. As for the promotion, it was certain for a few, who wrote glowing accounts of the service to their friends at home, and so helped on the recruiting. I worked at one goods yard where there were many of these countrymen employed, and they were certainly largely responsible for the low rate of wages—16*s.* 10*d.* for a seventy-two hour week. Not that I am blaming them. They were the victims of specious promises and official hypocrisy, and, as a matter of fact, when they were well seasoned they became as keen as any of the locals for better conditions.

The statement that a driver is of little use when off the footplate is only too true. No matter what ability he may possess as a driver, no matter how exemplary his conduct may be, he has only to make himself obnoxious to the company by taking an active interest in trade unionism, and he will run the risk of

being thrown on the industrial scrap heap, "of little or no use, even as a labourer." But why he should be twitted with the latter fact, only heaven and the *Railway News* know. As for the labour that "may be said to be unskilled," I maintain that there is no such thing. In all labour skill is a matter of degree. If any man doubts this, let him take a pick and shovel and try to keep his line in a gang of navvies, or load a goods van with "sundries," or drive a team of restive cattle, and then tell us whether these jobs require any skill at all. Even in hay-making he will have to be shown how to handle a rake.

The position taken up by many people was admirably illustrated by an article which appeared in the *Statist*—a journal which cannot be charged with any bias in favour of the men. After agreeing that some concessions should be made, it went on to inform railway shareholders that "it becomes more essential for railway directors and managers to increase the efficiency of labour and enable the demands of the men to be met out of the

economies effected by more skilful working." In other words, though the men were admittedly underpaid for the work they were then performing, they were to be driven into earning any further increase expediency suggested should be made. A position which would leave them pretty much in the same condition as before.

So far I have confined myself to the question of wages and hours, now I must introduce the matter round which the actual strike—when it occurred—took place, the question of " recognition " of the men's trade union by the companies.

If any employees had grievances, they were told that they could complain direct to the responsible heads of the departments. The objection to this was obvious—a man who complained about anything was a grumbler and ran the risk of punishment. That the risk was a very real one we saw in the case of driver Thornhill, and the unanimous demand of the men that they should be allowed to present their complaints through the union

showed how seriously they regarded the matter.

So long ago as 1890 recognition was one of the first questions dealt with at the men's annual conference. At that time all the companies, except one, refused to treat with "third parties." The exception was the North Eastern, which had averted a threatened strike at Newcastle-on-Tyne by meeting the union representatives and arranging satisfactory terms. Speaking to the North Eastern shareholders ten years later, Sir Joseph Pease said: "At all events, we on this board have never doubted the conclusion we came to to meet our men. We have arranged with them the advances to be given, and we trust that that settlement will continue to be, as it has been in the past, loyally adhered to. . . . The longer I live the more I see how strong and intelligent are our workmen and their unions, and I dislike more and more Government control, and I would rather leave it to the common sense of the men and those whom they and the shareholders appoint to conduct

these large affairs than to be tied down by antiquated opinions and, I was going to say, the wooden-headed policy of Government."

At the conferences held in Glasgow, Birmingham and Dublin in October and November, 1906, which presaged the All Grades Movement, it was resolved that, "The time has now arrived when the members of the society insist upon the recognition of the general secretary and the other head officials by the railway companies to negotiate on their behalf, and, further, that we do not enter into negotiations with any company in connection with this programme without full recognition." A copy of the programme was sent to each of the companies in the United Kingdom on January 17th, 1907, with a covering letter asking that a deputation, accompanied by Richard Bell, be received to discuss it. A large number of companies replied, all declining. Five weeks later the companies were written to again, and it was pointed out that the proposed deputation would consist of no one but Bell and the men

in their own employ. Again the companies refused, and on July 20th the same process was repeated by the union, with the same result.

The companies at first sought to justify their attitude by repeating the old story that there was no real discontent among the men, it was merely an agitator's affair and—this was their clinching argument—only a small percentage of the men were in the union, consequently only a small percentage of the men could possibly be discontented with their position.

The last argument did not last long, for members simply poured into the union. Then the matter became one of principle. Recognition was objected to because it would be subversive of discipline. The companies contended that to allow the union to intervene in disputes would hamper them in their business and injure their property "in a way unparalleled in other trade organisations, even where the principle of trade unionism is recognised." The *Great Western Magazine* asserted that "apart from what may be termed the domestic view of the 'recognition'

proposition, there is the feature that a railway, although a commercial undertaking, is not an industrial concern in the common acceptance of the term ; it is more in the nature of a public institution existing for the purpose of the public service ; for, as everyone will admit, railways are to-day essential and necessary to the community at large. The directors and officers are answerable to the public for any imperfection or disorganisation, and it would be subversive of discipline to admit any intermediary, just as it would be in the case of the public services proper."

The men's reply to this was that in America, where trade unions were officially recognised by the companies, no such result as that foreshadowed by the Great Western had followed. As to the point that the railway industry was peculiar and exceptional, like the public services, experience had proved that the principle of recognition had already been admitted on the public service to which reference was made.

A paragraph in the *Daily Chronicle* early

in May, 1907, was of great service. "The inconsistency of the railway directors in refusing to recognise the men's unions in cases of dispute, while, in their capacity of directors of other great industries they concede this right to their employees, has already been pointed out. A fortnight ago there was a strike of about thirty fitters on the Great Central at Sheffield. These men belonged to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. They were not asked to state their grievances through their foreman, as they would have been if they had belonged to the railway servant society. Instead of that Mr. Sam Fay, general manager of the Great Central, sent for Mr. George Barnes, M.P., secretary of the engineers' society, and asked him to negotiate in the matter."

The whole question of discipline turns, of course, on the meaning of the term. Discipline in the sense of organisation of their units and obedience to authority the men never objected to. But the directors did not mean that when they used the term. They

had in their employ officials whose sole duty was the harassing of men by giving them arbitrary orders, by spying upon them, and by generally acting the part of what we have become used to call by the French term *Agent Provocateur*. It was this bullying and brutalising of men that the directors were anxious to preserve.

Lord Claud Hamilton, chairman of the Great Eastern, speaking to the shareholders at the half-yearly meeting held on July 30th, referred at great length to the agitation. "In the first place we deny that there is any general unrest among the railway servants, or dissatisfaction with their position, or that the Amalgamated Society, which only includes a minority of railway servants as its members, has any right to speak on behalf of the majority, who are free and independent men, thoroughly capable of looking after their own interests. Secondly, we assert with confidence that the alleged universal unrest and dissatisfaction so often reiterated by speakers at meetings of the Amalgamated Society, is an

unfounded statement on the part of the executive of that society, who, for various reasons which people who read the signs of the times can well appreciate, regard the present as an opportune moment for increasing the membership of their society, and hope, by threats of a general strike, so to intimidate the railway companies as to force them not only to consider their total demands, which they themselves know are impracticable, but to recognise the society as a body who, in the future, should possess the right to come between the railway companies and their servants in matters of pay and internal administration.

"Speaking for the Great Eastern Railway, I am not going to contend that in every grade in our service the pay which the men receive is what we should like to be able, if our circumstances admitted of it, to give them, but they know well that we have from time to time, during the past years, given increases of pay in many cases, though, as I have just stated, more remains to be done in

that direction when the position of the company will allow us to do so without seriously imperilling its credit. Whilst making that admission, I contend, on the other hand, that the pay of most grades, having regard to the continuous nature of the men's employment, the privileges which they enjoy in certain respects, and the pensions to which they will be entitled if they choose to join the pension funds, is adequate for the services they perform, and enables them to maintain a highly respectable position in life, which is fully recognised by the general public throughout the kingdom, who have ample means of acquainting themselves with the circumstances of many classes of railway servants."

In this breathless way he went on for quite a long time. Railwaymen had continuous employment, they had decent wages and conditions—everything considered—and they were a happy contented band of men. The charges made against railway companies as a whole were examined as they affected the Great Eastern, and in many ways a most

plausible case was made out to the shareholders.

By this time Claud Hamilton was refusing recognition as a matter of principle. "The high level of efficiency (on British railways) to which I have alluded has only been obtained as the result of long and laborious experience on the part of the railway managers, coupled with the maintenance of strict discipline, and the willing and loyal co-operation of railway servants, who, as a class, are a credit to their country. . . . But supposing that railway boards conceded the right to an outside and irresponsible body to be the channel of communication betweed the men and themselves, do you for a moment suppose that the authority of the directors, which is essential to the maintenance of strict discipline, could be upheld? How much longer would the men in each department continue to observe the same respect they now have for the head of that department, when they knew that he would no longer be responsible, except in name, for their pay and control? And how

could the heads of departments be expected to continue to serve their directors with that zeal and fidelity which at present distinguishes them, when they were gradually becoming cognisant of the fact that their authority and responsibility was on the wane and steadily passing into other hands ?—for that is what the result of these concessions would mean, and it would bode ill for the future of railway administration and for the safety of the public. . . . We have fully and earnestly considered the alternative before us, and we do not intend to recognise the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. (Loud cheers.) I ask you, on behalf of my board, to join with us in the decision at which we have arrived ; I appeal to the outside public, whose welfare and safety as travellers depend upon the railways in this country being maintained in a high state of discipline and efficiency, to support us in the stand we are making to preserve for ourselves and the staff we employ the right to continue to enjoy the privileges of free citizens, untrammelled by the coercion

and tyranny of an outside, irresponsible, body of men. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)"

This was the first and most comprehensive speech made by a railway company chairman on the subject; the others followed in due course, and repeated, more or less clearly, the same sentiments: there was no real unrest, the men's leaders were actuated by the basest personal motives, and any complaints from employees, if made direct to the officials, would receive fair consideration. Everything that could be done to discredit the union was done. In October, Claud Hamilton issued a manifesto in which he set forth once more his reasons for refusing to concede recognition. The directors of the Great Eastern were as fathers to their employees and the public need have no fear but that the evil machinations of labour leaders would be brought to nought. Other chairmen circularised their staffs to inform them of the trust reposed in their devotion to duty, and the Great Western called a meeting "to consider the position of those who are prepared to remain

loyal to the company and to offer advice to others."

There were by this time definite preparations for a strike. The men in the A.S.R.S. and the G.R.W.U. (General Railway Workers' Union) were balloted as to whether they were for or against, and on Sunday night, November 3rd, there was a monster demonstration in the Albert Hall, London, where the result of the ballot was made known. The strange part of this period, however, was that, although there was tremendous enthusiasm among the men, although a fair section of the press espoused their cause, and the public seemed to be in sympathy, there was a persistent disbelief in the possibility of a strike. The papers representing the companies, when they were not busy denouncing the men for their demands, characterised the whole movement as a piece of bluff on the part of Richard Bell. I believe they were right in the direct charge and wrong in the deductions they drew from their own conclusions.

Richard Bell, M.P., was an excellent secre-

tary and organiser. He had a great capacity for work of a certain kind. The compilation of the "Green Book," for which he was responsible, and the collection of data of various kinds to prove any case he put forward, was always excellent in its way. The qualities which enabled him to do this helped to put the society on a good business footing, but they were not the qualities required of a general in the industrial army when that army is meant to fight. Excellent as he was as a secretary, he was not a strike agitator or leader. He was too much of a politician. The atmosphere of the lobbies of the House of Commons, the offices of Government officials, and the back-door methods of the Board of Trade appealed more to his nature. He preferred arrangements, compromise, bringing "influence to bear" on interested parties, and the game of politics, to an industrial fight.

When he spoke at the Albert Hall meeting, announcing the result of the ballot—80,026 for a strike, and 1,857 against—and stated

that there had been a request from the Board of Trade for a postponement of hostilities, it is more than probable that he knew every plan that had been made for "settling the men."

On November 6th the agitation ended. The President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Lloyd George, proposed a scheme of conciliation boards, to which both the companies and the men agreed. The boards were simply joint committees of the companies and the men, appointed to discuss the men's grievances and demands, and endeavour to come to some peaceable settlement which would satisfy both parties. The boards were only to be convened after the men had approached the companies through the usual channels—either by petitions or deputations to the management—and failed to obtain satisfaction. The systems were graded and sectioned out, then the grades in each section elected committees and secretaries and formulated their programmes. The secretaries must be men in the companies' employ, and the subjects competent to be dealt with were confined to rates of pay and

hours of labour. When the sectional board failed to arrive at a settlement, the question was to be referred, on the motion of either side, to the Central Conciliation Board, which consisted of the representatives of the companies and one or more representatives chosen from the employees' side of each sectional board. In the event of the central board failing to arrive at a satisfactory solution, the matter was to be referred to a single arbitrator. Twelve months' notice was to be given before either side was at liberty to terminate this scheme, and no such notice was to be given within six years from the date of the scheme's inception.

No purpose would be served by commenting upon the scheme just at this point. It met with the approval of the public and the press because it apparently shunted any possibility of a strike for at least seven years. As for the men, it took them by surprise, and as presented by the press and their leaders it had certain attractive features. What its actual effect was we shall see later.

CHAPTER X

THE STRIKE—AND RECONCILIATION

The national railway strike of 1911—General discontent—Unity among railwaymen's unions—The strike declared—The Government aid the companies—Cabinet offers a Royal Commission—Chaos—Mr. Asquith's blunder—Mr. Churchill's military display—A damning indictment of the Government—P. W. W.—The politicians' attitude to public questions—Home Office fabrications—The strike settlement—"Men beaten"—A "Committee of Inquiry" appointed—Men return to work.

THE much talked of and frequently postponed national railway strike took place in August, 1911. It occurred at a time when the whole force of labour in this country was in a state of grave discontent. In June the seamen and firemen went on strike, by the middle of July their fight was won and a dockers' strike was in progress, in addition to a number of others such as the carters' in Manchester, platers' and riveters' at Hebburn-

on-Tyne, and the miners' of Pendleton in Lancashire. By the end of July a number of men were locked out of the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway works at Horwich, and the rest, both union and non-union men, left the works in consequence. In London, 100,000 transport workers held out rigidly against the blandishments of the owners; not one section would return to work until the demands of all had been satisfied.

Meanwhile Liverpool was in a frenzy. A number of railwaymen there had struck in sympathy with the dockers, and to draw attention to their own grievances. The owners tried to break the men by giving concessions to the dockers, but the latter refused to return to work until the railwaymen were reinstated. In retaliation the owners declared a lock-out which affected 20,000 workers on cargo boats. The men countered by calling a general strike of transport workers, and 100,000 men were involved. Military paraded the streets with fixed bayonets, thousands of police were drafted into the city from London and other

places, three gun-boats were requisitioned, and one of them lay in the Mersey with its guns trained on the docks.

As the strike progressed, disorder became general, a number of people were batoned and others shot. That the police acted in a brutal manner is certain. One M.P. who visited Liverpool was shown films by a cinematograph operator which pictured policemen chasing helpless stragglers into side streets and mercilessly bludgeoning them. The operator feared that he would be prevented by the authorities from carrying on his business if he made the films public, so he adopted the safe course of destroying this evidence incriminating the "protectors of the public." At Llanelly two men were shot dead by the military acting for the railway companies. Four others were wounded. At the inquest on the dead men, the jury, acting on the coroner's advice, returned a verdict of "justifiable homicide." But apparently they were not pleased with the coroner's advice, for they added a rider which nullified their verdict. They said:

" We think it would have been better if other means than giving an order to fire had been adopted by Major Stuart for the purpose of dispersing the crowd."

The feeling against the owners was intense throughout the labour world, and the head offices of the four railwaymen's unions were flooded with telegrams from local branches demanding a general strike. For the first time there was absolute agreement between the executives of the railway unions—the A.S.R.S. (Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants), the A.S.L.E.F. (Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen), the U.P.S.S. (United Pointsmen and Signalmen's Society), and the G.R.W.U. (General Railway Workers Union). On Tuesday, August 15th, the members of the unions' executive committees met in Liverpool, a joint committee was formed and a policy agreed upon.

The decision arrived at was that a national strike would be declared immediately, unless the railway companies decided within twenty-four hours, beginning at eight o'clock the

following morning, to negotiate for a basis of agreement. Attention was called to an A.S.R.S. resolution of the previous September warning the public that if the vexatious attitude adopted by the companies with regard to the conciliation boards was persisted in, the men would be constraiend to repudiate the scheme entirely.

Following upon the joint meeting in Liverpool, the four general secretaries of the unions travelled to London and met the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Sydney Buxton, at three o'clock the following day. Prior to this meeting the companies' representatives had conferred with Buxton, and the net result of the day's proceedings was summed up in a statement issued to the press at 5.30 the same afternoon. "The Government having assured the railway companies that they will give them adequate protection to enable them to carry on their services, the railway companies are prepared, even in the event of a general railway strike, to give an effective if restricted service."

The next morning (Thursday) the full joint committee of the men, having travelled from Liverpool overnight, presented themselves at the Board of Trade offices for a conference with Sydney Buxton, the Cabinet meanwhile holding a council meeting in Downing Street. Buxton put five questions to the men and then submitted the same, with replies, to the Cabinet. They were as follows :

1. What were the actual causes on which the executive had based their action in issuing their manifesto ?

Answer : The failure of the railway companies to behave in the spirit and letter of the Conciliation Board agreement of 1907, and the utter impossibility of the men's representatives to redress the many grievances of which the men complained.

2. What were the actual grievances in connection with the Conciliation Board agreement of 1907 ?

3. Were those grievances sufficiently grave to justify the action which the executive had taken ?

Answer : Yes.

4. Could those grievances

Answer : Yes. By the sug-

not be remedied in a less drastic way ?

gestion offered by the committee to the railway companies requesting them to meet authorised representatives of the men.

5. Could those grievances be remedied in the way proposed by the men of a general railway strike ?

Answer : Yes. In our opinion it is the only course.

We have also considered the possibility of further questions being asked, and we have unanimously come to the conclusion that the only way that will now be an effective method of peace is that the companies consent to meet us.

When the Cabinet had considered the replies, the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, visited the men and offered them a " Royal Commission to investigate the working of the conciliation agreement, and to report what amendments, if any, are desirable in the scheme, with a view to promote a satisfactory settlement of the grievances."

This was obviously the old parliamentary game of staving off the trouble by a prolonged inquiry in the hope that the men would settle down to work and lose their enthusiasm for a fight. Unfortunately for the Government it was too obvious, and the men refused to accept the proposal. They not only refused it, but they complained bitterly of Asquith's method of trying to force it upon them. To use their own words : " This was what the Government offered, and all they offered, through the mouth of the Prime Minister, but in the opinion of the deputation it was accompanied by a statement so menacing that the men eventually decided to have nothing to do with the offer." As matters had now come to a deadlock, 2,000 telegrams were dispatched to the various railway centres calling out the men. As to what the menacing statement was, subsequent events were eloquent.

Friday morning found the railways in a state of chaos. Some stations had to be closed down at once. The men struck in thousands as they finished their shifts. In

under six hours 150 telegrams were received at the A.S.R.S. head office, all bearing the same words : " Men all out."

The thousands of men whom the companies had boasted were anxious to drive their engines and carry on traffic operations in the event of a strike, the men who had been repeatedly used to prove that unrest did not exist because of their desire for jobs on the railway, could not be found. It was the most effective strike that ever occurred in this country.

On behalf of the Government, Asquith, realising that his blunt and frank opposition to the men had made matters worse instead of better, gave way to the suave and wily Lloyd George, by now Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Home Secretary, Mr. Winston Churchill, kept the Government's promise to the companies by planting troops at the stations throughout the country. The dangerous method of attempting to overawe the men by a display of armed force was openly indulged in, and it was obvious to every

observer that the most repressive measures would be adopted by the authorities if the slightest excuse was given. The men's leaders were not left in any doubt on this matter. In their resolution rejecting the Government offer, on the Thursday, it was announced that, "having given careful consideration to the Prime Minister's statement and *the remarks which accompanied it, but which the Government has not ventured to commit to writing*, (we) resolve as follows: That we consider the statement made on behalf of His Majesty's Government as an unwarrantable threat against railway workers. . . ." The threat used by Asquith was given about a week later by Mr. Bellamy, president of the A.S.R.S., and reported in the *Nottingham Guardian* of August 28th.

"The words Mr. Asquith did use," said Mr. Bellamy, "were something like this: 'We cannot allow the commerce of the country to be interfered with in the way it would be by a national dispute, and we want you men to realise, in the event of it reaching

that stage, *His Majesty's Government have decided that they will use all the civil and military forces at their disposal to see that the commerce of this country is not interfered with.*' That," continued Mr. Bellamy, " he believed, was what was said, word for word, and he asked them what other conclusion they could arrive at than that the Government intended to take the side of the railway companies, if need be, in order to defeat the men."

The outstanding fact was that the military forces were used freely. The *Times*, presumably inspired by the Government, declared that cavalry was to be employed at the big stations, and to patrol the railway lines, and it was contemplated that Royal Engineers would be used to run the mail and continental services. The only people whose convenience was considered seem to have been the railway directors. Speaking in the House of Commons on the Friday, Winston Churchill said : " Manchester is perfectly quiet, the strike leaders having appealed for order, but the railway service is greatly disorganised."

Manchester was quiet, the civil authorities there—the Lord Mayor, the Watch Committee and the Chief Constable, the people responsible for the government and protection of the city—did not apprehend any trouble and did not want the military, but the troops were sent in spite of them. The Lord Mayor demanded an explanation. He was informed by the commanding officer, General Burney, that they were there at the request of the "Railway Companies." On the Monday following, General Burney left with his men because the companies had informed him that they had "no further need for his services." In one or two other places the civil authorities managed to keep their districts clear of military, but they had to make a struggle for it.

The most damning indictment of the Government, however, came from P. W. W., the special parliamentary correspondent of the chief Liberal newspaper, the *Daily News*. But before quoting his article of August 21st, the Monday after the strike, I must ask the

reader to remember these facts: P. W. W. is noted for his facility in procuring reliable Government information before other press men can get hold of it; probably no other journalist is such an expert at—shall we be kind and say—"flattering" Liberal Cabinet Ministers and rising Liberal politicians as he is; and finally, the *Daily News* informed its readers, on the same day that his article appeared, that it was a "thoroughly informed account."

"Saturday morning," wrote P. W. W., "brought the Government face to face with the tremendous and incalculable results of the *repression policy*. Every soldier was standing sentry or under call to do so. If more trouble arose the reserves would have to be mobilised. It dawned upon the Government that, *though the strike might be crushed in blood* by Monday or Tuesday, other steps might be taken by labour. The Engineers, numbering 100,000, were ready to reinforce the railwaymen. The south Scottish miners were also actively preparing, a matter of great

interest to representatives of Midlothian (Chief Liberal Whip's seat), Fifeshire (Asquith's seat), and, be it added, Dundee (Churchill's seat). Moreover, the whole South Wales coal-field, on which depends the Navy, needed but the word.

" Politically, it was obvious, in view of the attitude of the Labour Party, that *the Government would fall during the autumn session if the policy of batons, bayonets and bullets continued* over the week end, solely, be it remembered, because the managers were not required by the Government to discuss matters with the men."

I have emphasised two points in that quotation. (Italics and bracketed words are mine.) The first is that the " repression policy," the policy of crushing the strikers " in blood," the policy of " batons, bayonets and bullets," was a deliberate policy, and the second is that the paramount interest of the leading members of the Government was in their own political positions. P. W. W. there gives some idea of the cynical views of

present day politicians with regard to national welfare.

On the Thursday evening, before declaring the strike, the men had sent a note to Asquith "to ask whether he has done, is doing, or intends to do, anything to bring the representatives of the railway companies and the employees together to-day." The question paper came back with the written reply: "The answer is in the negative." As we have already seen, Asquith's offer was a Royal Commission. According to P. W. W., "The companies were delighted. The awkward question of 'recognition' seemed to be shelved for months. (Evidently P. W. W. had no illusions as to the object of the Commission.) If the men refused the Royal Commission they would appear unreasonable. Moreover, the Government went so far as to give the companies in advance of negotiations a written *carte blanche* to call upon the troops. It was this remarkable and probably unprecedented document that was heralded forth by the companies as an absolute

guarantee of an adequate, if restricted, train service. The knowledge that troops with ball cartridges and naked bayonets would be virtually under the instructions of the companies wherever picketing was effective at once produced an unparalleled situation."

It did. And one of the factors in the situation was that it absolutely swept recognition out of the field. The men had foolishly, but implicitly, believed in the Government's impartiality, but it was impossible to deceive themselves further when they learned that the troops were in the hands of the companies. On the Saturday morning the *Times* printed the following :

" The following official statement was issued from the Home Office at 11.30 last night :

" ' The railway strike developed to-day all over the country and produced a widespread though partial dislocation in the railway services. Most of the trains, both for goods and passengers, have been got through, and the necessary services are well maintained.

" ' So far as the present information goes,

considerably more than two-thirds of the railwaymen are remaining at their posts. Numerous applications are being received by the railway companies for employment. The companies report that the defections have not been in excess of expectations.

" ' It has not yet been found necessary to put in force special arrangements with regard to emergency traffic.' "

It was not all false, only the important points, but it was an open acknowledgment of the Government's hostility to the men. Commenting upon it in debate in the House of Commons later, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald said : " The statements with which it opened were inaccurate ; the expressions of opinion in the middle were nonsensical ; and the effect in the end was simply to make the men more inclined to go on fighting." Which was true. On its appearance the joint committee promptly resolved that all negotiations were at an end until they were face to face with the directors, a resolution which had the desired effect. By noon, conditions throughout the

country gave the lie direct to Churchill's fatuous message from the Home Office, and it was obvious that, in spite of the movements of the military, the country was in the hands of the men. (It is out of my province to discuss the rumours of a threatened German invasion.) To continue P. W. W.'s statement:

"With brief decision the entire position was abandoned by those acting for the Cabinet. A peremptory message was sent to the companies telling them that a round table conference must be conceded at once and unconditionally. As speedily the companies on their side surrendered. At noon, and for 11½ hours afterwards, the managers sat face to face with the four union representatives, assisted by Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Arthur Henderson. Recognition, on this occasion, was won—on the brink of civil war." In reading that paragraph do not omit to note the two chief points. *On this occasion* is one—recognition is not yet won by railwaymen. The other is that the companies only needed the order from the

Government when they *as speedily surrendered.* The word "collusion," used by some people in referring to the previous relationship between the Government and the companies, may, under the circumstances, be forgiven.

The settlement was signed by representatives of the Board of Trade, the companies, and the unions at 11 o'clock on the Saturday evening. The strike was to be terminated at once, the strikers were to return, and to work amicably with the blacklegs, the conciliation boards were to be specially convened for the settlement of outstanding disputes, and the previously despised Royal Commission to be accepted and all assistance rendered to it by both sides, provided that it was arranged and set to work at once. Immediately the agreement was signed the men's delegates sent the following telegram to all the branches of the unions: "Joint Committee have settled strike. Victory for Trade Unionism. All men must return to work immediately." "Victory for Trade Unionism" might mean anything. It

certainly did not mean that the trade unions had won what the men struck for, and as it was sufficiently vague to arouse their suspicions, a number refused to return "to work immediately."

On the night when peace was declared I was at the Board of Trade offices "covering" the conference for a certain newspaper. As the men left the conference room and filed out of the lobby the effects of the long discussion were evident on their faces, they looked harassed, worn and worried. In their general bearing and demeanour there was certainly no evidence that they had just won a victory, either for trade unionism or anything else. An old journalist standing near me, note-book in hand, gave one glance at them and then commenced writing. The first words he wrote, and his lips spoke the words as his pencil inscribed them, were: "Men beaten." When I arrived at the office with my report the terms of settlement were already coming over the tape. The editor, who was reading them, smiled wearily and said: "Damn the men! I

thought they would have won *this* time." A sufficient indication as to what men experienced in these matters thought of the victory.

Within four days of the settlement the men's joint committee was dealing with cases where the companies had refused to reinstate men, or had offered them inferior positions, and the following notice was sent to the press: "The attention of this Joint Executive, having been called to the fact that some railway companies are not giving effect to the agreement arrived at on Saturday, August 19th, we desire to inform our members and all concerned that we intend to enforce the agreement in letter and spirit." Without doubt another strike for a more substantial prize would have been welcomed by the men, but gradually sane counsels prevailed with the companies, and both sides settled down to work and wait for the commissioners' report.

CHAPTER XI

A ROYAL COMMISSION—AND MORE CONCILIATION

The Commissioners—The impartial chairman—Their terms of reference—A review of the past—The companies' violation of agreements—The 1907 Conciliation Boards—Companies' delay in setting them up—The companies to interpret the awards—Evading the payment of concessions awarded—The engine drivers' complaints—Recognition again—The Commissioners' report—Recognition not conceded—Conciliation scheme merely improved—Men refuse to accept it—Another ballot for a strike—Parliament demands another meeting between companies and men—Scheme modified—Accepted by men's leaders—The present position—Varying opinions of value of conciliation—How the scheme works—The impartial chairman again—The companies' attitude—The men must not be allowed to unite—Conciliation develops sectionalism.

THE Royal Commission appointed to investigate the working of the 1907 scheme and report what changes, if any, were desirable, with a view to the prompt and satisfactory

settlement of differences, held twenty-nine sittings, and heard the evidence of sixty-seven witnesses. It consisted of five members, two to represent the companies, two the men, and the chairman to be impartial. The warrant appointing it was signed August 22nd, 1911. The first meeting was held on August 23rd, when arrangements were made to sit day by day from August 28th. The title given to the Commission was "Special Committee of Inquiry," as this was held to be less objectionable than that of Royal Commission.

The men chosen by the Government as commissioners were: For the railway companies, Sir Thomas R. Ratcliffe Ellis, secretary to the Mining Association of Great Britain and the Federated Coal Owners Association, and Mr. Charles Gabriel Beale, director of the London City and Midland Bank and solicitor to the Midland Railway Company.

For the men, Mr. Arthur Henderson, Labour M.P. for Barnard Castle and secretary to the North-East Coast Conciliation Board since 1894, and Mr. John Burnett, chief

Labour correspondent to the Board of Trade, 1893-1907.

The impartial chairman was Sir David Harrel, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., who had spent twenty years in the Royal Irish Constabulary, was a resident magistrate in 1897, and held office during the Land League agitation. In 1893 he was appointed Permanent Under Secretary for Ireland, retiring in 1902.

The men at first objected to Beale because of his connection with the Midland, but strangely enough they did not object to anyone else. Burnett, to all intents and purposes, was a Government servant. Henderson is an ex-Liberal election agent, a member of the Labour Party, and therefore, during this period of coalition government, virtually a member of the Government which had just given " the companies in advance of negotiation a written *carte blanche* to call upon the troops." It is not merely possible, but probable, that so far as realising the feelings, the sufferings and desires of the goods porter goes, the men's " representatives " were not

one whit better than those of the companies. During the course of the third day's proceedings Henderson characterised the strike as a " brutal method of industrial warfare," this, be it marked, whilst he was questioning one of the men he was supposed to represent. Throughout the inquiry he was obsessed by the desire for a guarantee that there was to be no further " stoppage of work."

However, such were the members of the Commission. From the terms of reference they were confined to a consideration of the workings of the boards, but the evidence on this point alone showed that the very title, " conciliation," was in itself ridiculous. The companies never attempted to be conciliatory. Within two months of the 1907 settlement the A.S.R.S. indicted the London and North Western before the Board of Trade for the manner in which it was conducting the scheme. The terms of settlement provided that " in the absence of an agreement to the contrary the expenses of the conciliation boards and of arbitration shall in each case

be divided between the railway companies and their employees." Immediately after the formation of the scheme the London and North Western held a meeting of their officials at Euston, when it was decided to issue a voting paper to their men asking if they would agree to the company paying all expenses of the conciliation boards, " including the wages and expenses of the men's representatives." The officials were to do all in their power to get the men to vote " Yes."

The men claimed that this was a violation of the agreement. They were convinced that any man who signed " No " would be interfered with later. And they had good reason for their suspicions, for at the bottom of the voting paper each man had to give his name, grade, and the station where he was employed. The obvious intention of the companies was to pack the boards with their own creatures, and the London and North Western circular was not the only method adopted. Circulars were distributed on certain lines encouraging non-unionists to elect men from amongst

themselves and asking them to report any man who should endeavour to press the union's claims. In one district a non-unionist driver acted on this advice and was allowed to spend time canvassing for support when he should have been attending to his duties. In addition to this, "loyalist" candidates distributed election circulars which it was impossible for them to have paid for out of their own pockets.

When the representatives were elected there was an unconscionable delay in setting up the boards. The terms of settlement setting up the machinery were arrived at on November 6th, 1907, and the two earliest boards to be formed were the Great Eastern and the Midland, on March 1st and April 2nd, 1908, respectively. The average was June, 1908, or about seven months after the settlement was arrived at. As there had been no departure from the original claims made by the men on January 18th, 1907—seventeen months between the presentment of the claims and the earliest attempt to consider it—is it

any wonder that a great deal of aggravation was expressed ?

Then there was the cost of arbitration. Eleven boards went to arbitration and the cost of these worked out for the A.S.R.S. at various figures from £636 on the London and North Western to £1,806 on the Midland. But perhaps the most annoying part was the companies' claim to the exclusive right to decide whether to go to arbitration or not; and when they did go to the arbitrator it was on some very small point.

Even when the arbitrator had made his award there was trouble as to its interpretation. The men's claim was that the award was the joint product of the two sides of the board, but when they came to deal with the question of interpreting it, practically all the companies said: "The award is our instrument, you have nothing whatever to do with its interpretation."

Mr. A. Bellamy, president of the A.S.R.S., in his evidence before the committee on the Sir Edward Fry award, which gave substantial

concessions to some of the London and North Western men, pointed out that it took twelve months from the completion of arbitration proceedings to get an interpretation, and then the company was the interpreter, and, by a system of regrading, evaded the extra payment due to many of the men. Cases were given of men in receipt of 27*s*. and 29*s*. a week as passenger guards being replaced by "porter-guards" at 22*s*. and 24*s*. a week. Bellamy mentioned a porter-guard at 20*s*. a week who, only a month before, had been set to do the work of a passenger guard entitled to 27*s*. a week, without receiving any increase in wages. Another case he mentioned was that of the London and North Western shunters at Buxton, who were awarded an eight-hour day by the arbitrator. Soon after the award was made the London and North Western and the Midland amalgamated at Buxton. The Midland, of course, took over the shunters, thus nullifying the award. "You don't suggest that that method was adopted in order to avoid the award?" asked Commissioner

Henderson, as if the "suggestion" were necessary. "I don't make that suggestion, I only stated facts and let them speak for themselves," replied Bellamy. Instances were given of permanent men being displaced after an award was made and casuals engaged instead; then the companies avoided the award because, so they claimed, casuals were not included in the scheme.

Further to this matter, Bellamy said: "In the year prior to the award (on the London and North Western) for the locomotivemen, £815,000 odd was paid in wages, and last year, after a full year's working of the award, when there was a considerably larger number of passengers, and something like 2,000,000 tons more of goods carried, the company paid £771,910 only in wages for the working of locomotives. Therefore the companies had recouped themselves and the men were not reaping any advantages."

Mr. Albert Fox, general secretary of the A.S.R.E.F., complained in his evidence of the penalties inflicted upon men for petty

offences. Engine drivers were suspended, fined, and reduced in wages as much as 1*s.* 6*d.* a day for being five minutes late with an express train, and all opportunity of proving that they were not to blame was denied them. When they complained they were told that if they did not like it they could leave the service. The companies contended that these were matters of discipline and could not be dealt with by the boards as they did not come under the heading of wages. So disgusted with the 1907 scheme did some of the men become that, long before the 1911 strike occurred, they refused to take any part whatever in electing representatives to the boards, and even when the boards were formed, they refused to allow any question affecting them to be put forward.

The defects in the scheme and the difficulties of the men in trying to extract some benefit from it were too numerous for detailed account. As a concluding instance of the companies' efforts at conciliation I will just mention the evidence of one witness in reference

to the workers in goods yards and sidings where there was no scale of wages. When the men's representatives asked for a scale they were informed that their request was an impertinence and that they " would want to know next what were the wages of inspectors and stationmasters."

Much stress was laid by the men upon the need for recognition, and the companies as strenuously opposed it. Mr. H. A. Walker, assistant to the general manager of the London and North Western, said the meaning of the recognition asked for was " an indefinite something which the railway companies were asked to concede with a view to enabling trade unions to coerce non-unionists to join their societies, so as to dictate terms to the companies and, if they desired to declare a strike, with every possibility of success. Having obtained that position by sheer weight of numbers, it was not difficult to forecast that the unions would use their power ruthlessly, regardless of any arrangements with the companies, the convenience of the public,

the cutting off of the food supply, the interests of the Empire, or the safety of the nation." He admitted he had had no dealings with the trade union leaders.

On October 18th, 1911, the commissioners issued their report. It was eminently satisfactory to everybody but railwaymen. The latter had been led to believe that recognition would be recommended, and it was not. In the manifesto published by the men's leaders on the night of the settlement a paragraph appeared which stated : " We have no hesitation in saying that, in addition to having won official recognition in negotiating the present dispute, our evidence before the Commission will be such that justifies us in saying that, before many weeks are over, railway workers will have won a charter long enjoyed by every other class of the community." They were bitterly disappointed. What was granted was that a trade-union official could act as secretary to a conciliation board, a distinct advance, but a long way from giving the union power to act as direct

negotiating agent between the men and the companies in all matters of dispute or difference of opinion.

In some matters the new scheme was an improvement on the old. The old one had restricted the boards to the questions of hours and wages. The new one added "conditions of service." Trip systems, mileage clauses, bonuses, and the like were thus made legitimate matters for consideration. Under this head of "conditions" it was recommended that "lists showing the existing rates of wages, hours of labour, and all other conditions of service of the various grades of employees covered by the scheme shall be prepared as soon as possible by the company and printed in a suitable form at its expense." These lists were to be exhibited in accessible places so that every employee might know his conditions of service. It will be remembered that when this was suggested by the men it was a piece of impertinence.

The strongest objection was taken to the clauses relating to the negotiations preliminary

to the bringing of business before the conciliation boards. The report suggested that if any section of employees wished to bring any question to the notice of the company, they should present a petition signed by at least 25 per cent. of their number. Under the Board of Trade regulations, only 10 per cent. had been required to sign. In the event of a company proposing to take any step detrimental to the men's interest, the proposal would automatically operate if 25 per cent. of the men affected did not sign a petition against it within twenty-eight days from the date upon which the men's secretary was notified. These clauses put the men in an impossible position. Take the Great Western for example, with its main routes from Paddington to Penzance, New Milford, Birkenhead, and other wide ramifications. It would be a sheer impossibility to get the necessary 25 per cent. of signatories to a petition from the Great Western platelayers, say. This claim for petitions also served to give point to the men's demand for recognition. It was

diametrically opposed to the whole principle of trade unionism. No other section of industrial workers needs to get its claims endorsed in this way when once they have been formulated by the men's accredited representatives.

" The more I ponder over the details of the scheme outlined by the commissioners, the less I like it," was the comment of the A.S.R.S. general secretary, and after a four days' discussion, the joint committee of the men's unions decided to refer the question of its acceptance to the men themselves. Ballot papers were sent out and the men were asked to vote on the question of whether they were prepared to accept the report or strike again for recognition, and a new national programme to be drawn up by the joint committee. As an indication of what the men wanted, the ballot was a failure. Many of them refused to vote on the ground that the report was absolutely worthless in every particular, and that another strike should have been called immediately it was issued.

On the other hand, the companies and the Board of Trade stated that the men were bound to accept the report, as, when the settlement was signed, both sides pledged themselves to abide by the findings of the Commission. The men denied this. Buxton was challenged in the House to provide the Board of Trade evidence of the men's pledge, but he evaded the challenge, and further questions elicited no satisfactory proof of his assertion. A statement made by Lloyd George in the House on August 17th, to the effect that the Government did not intend " to lure out of the men's hands the great weapon of striking, but to arrive at a decision in such a way that if not satisfied with the recommendations—*and they were not bound by the recommendations*—they could still fall back upon the powerful weapon in their hands," was used against Buxton. That statement, coming from such a source, clinched the matter—so far as this charge was concerned.

The broad question, however, still remained to be settled. The men's ballot papers were

to be sent in by December 5th, and, unless something was done in the meantime, there was every probability of another strike, so on Wednesday, November 22nd, the Government moved a resolution, which was agreed to without a division, " That in the opinion of this House, a meeting should take place between representatives of the parties on whose behalf the Railway Agreement of August, 1911, was signed, to discuss the best mode of giving effect to the report of the Royal Commission, and this House asks the Government to use its good offices to bring both sides into conference without delay."

It was scarcely a " peremptory message," such as P. W. W. told us the Cabinet sent on a previous occasion, but all the same the companies surrendered and a joint meeting was arranged to discuss the report. The result of this conference was another agreement between the representatives of the companies, the men, and the Board of Trade, wherein the most objectionable features of the commissioners' scheme were somewhat

modified, but still recognition was as far off as ever.

Immediately the men were up again. The agreement was signed before the result of the ballot was made known. The union leaders were heckled and condemned at meetings throughout the country. At one or two large railway centres their resignations were called for, and they spent much time and energy in vindicating their positions. In defence they urged that the best had been made of a very difficult job, and one of them openly hinted that the result of the ballot, which he refused to make public, justified them in making the best terms they could as speedily as possible.

After a few weeks of these internal quarrels the unions settled down to utilise the improved machinery, but they found that the improvements had not made it in any way perfect.

As to its present value there is a wide divergence of opinion. Mr. J. H. Thomas, A.S.R.S. organising secretary, answering a question as to whether the men had gained

by the institution of the joint boards, said: "Most emphatically, yes. Of course I don't mean to suggest that the men have obtained all they set out for, but speaking for railwaymen generally, I say they have secured a more substantial increase than they ever did before, and incidentally we have secured a reduction of hours as well." He further stated that the rank and file showed an increasing desire to be brought under the scheme. "The failure of the boards, so far as they have failed, has been in the spirit in which awards are interpreted by the companies."

The opinions expressed by men I have talked to are exactly opposite to those of Thomas. Two engine drivers and a shunter, all employed on the London and North Western, recently said to me: "We don't know a man who believes in or cares about the scheme." They all looked on it as a piece of "bluff," designed to keep them waiting for reforms until they settled down to the idea that nothing was to be got. The word "recognition" appeared frequently in

their conversation. They still want what they have agitated for during the past twenty years, the right to present their demands through their union representatives. Failing that, they were agreed on the point that it was even better to deal direct with the railway officials than to trust to the joint boards. After going into a long list of objections to the scheme, the shunter concluded: "Until we get real recognition there will be no satisfaction and the unions will never have the power they ought to have. But conciliation! It's hopeless. When the present terms are ended you bet the scheme will never again be entered into. It isn't worth anything, not even discussing. Let's drop talking about it." And they did.

Another engine driver, a member of a conciliation board, wrote me in February of this year and stated that "At —— station passenger porters have received Sunday pay; they have had their maximum wage increased from 17*s.* 10*d.* per week to £1. But at the same time the minimum has been reduced

from 16*s.* 10*d.* to 10*s.* per week. It will take a porter ten years to attain the maximum. Who is the gainer? We have a train of ballastmen in the permanent-way department here. Though they are sometimes only allowed thirty-five, forty, or forty-five minutes for dinner, they have always sixty minutes deducted from their time. This in spite of constant appeals to the conciliation boards. Conciliation boards! We have renamed them 'irritation boards.'"

Personally I agree with the men. The scheme can be of no lasting benefit to them. Take the ordinary course of an application for improved conditions. A section of men formulates a programme, then the requisite number of signatures must be obtained before it can be presented to the company by deputation. If the deputation does not get a satisfactory reply, the programme is handed over to the conciliation board. Failing settlement by the board, the independent chairman is called in. The independent chairman is the be-all and end-all of the scheme. Now

the supposition is that this individual is absolutely impartial. Considering the fact that he is appointed by the Board of Trade—that department of traitors to labour and the nation, that he is chosen from a class of men whose whole scheme of existence alienates them from a sympathetic understanding of the workers and predisposes them to take sides with the employers, I hold that he never can act impartially. Why, the "independent" chairman, whose decision on the points in dispute between the Caledonian Company and their men was issued on March 29th of this year, was T. R. Ratcliffe-Ellis, the selfsame gentleman who represented the companies on the Commission appointed to inquire into the scheme at the time of the strike!

To proceed, we will assume that the chairman is what is termed "fair." He must then base his award on "comparisons." That means he must compare the conditions of the men on the line he is called in to arbitrate upon to conditions prevailing on other lines in the district. He must also

consider the financial positions of the various lines he is using as a basis for comparison. Thus, if the chairman is considering the claims of a section of men who are paid badly in comparison with a similar section of men on a neighbouring line, he will probably decide in the men's favour—other things being equal. If other things are not equal, that is to say if the rate of interest paid to shareholders on the line where the men are badly paid is lower than that paid by the other company or companies, then the men will receive little or no improvement in their conditions. Now reverse the position. Suppose a section of men on a certain railway claim an advance, and they happen to be already receiving as good—or better—wages than similar sections on other railways in the district. Fair or unfair chairman, they are up against the stop blocks unless the company prefers to concede some small items so as to keep up the fiction of the utility of the conciliation scheme.

The main point of the scheme's supporters

is that men who are outside continually ask that they shall be brought under its operation. But this is quite easy to understand. If a section of men rated at 19*s.* a week receives an advance of 1*s.* or 2*s.*, the other men with whom they come in contact, who are also receiving only 19*s.* a week, will soon begin to imagine vain things. Under the conciliation scheme they cannot enlist the support of other grades unless included in its provisions, so they are helpless without it. And they too frequently find that they are helpless with it. The sections which generally benefit are the sections likely, and more or less able, to make things awkward by breaking away altogether.

Now, what has been and what must be the attitude of the companies to conciliation? Whilst the men were badly organised the companies opposed it. When the men were united and determined to force better conditions, the companies saw the possibilities in the complex machinery of the boards. There is delay in coming to definite results, for

instance, an important factor in their calculations. We have already learned of the delay when the scheme was started in 1907; here is another case—one of many—since 1911. The Taff Vale traffic men's programme was drawn up on April 9th, 1912. After going through the preliminary stages it was presented to the conciliation board. The board met on October 10th, adjourned to October 14th, adjourned to October 15th, and again adjourned to October 21st. Then matters were referred to the arbitrator, who issued his award, making the same operative from the 13th of January, 1913. The period of time which elapsed between the formulation of the programme and the coming into operation of the award was thus nine months.

The workers' representatives, not having learned that the English tradition of fair play had been degraded to such an extent that only the workers were expected to play fair, agreed to "impartial" Government regulation of the conciliation machinery. A scheme was devised which proved unsuccessful; the organ-

ised workmen became restive and ultimately struck; the Government made a few blunders, but quickly recovered itself and persuaded the workers' representatives that the scheme would work smoothly with a little improvement. Again the scheme failed and again it was patched up, and all the time the cost of living was increasing and the struggle for existence in the labour world became more and more intense.

At its best the machinery of conciliation and arbitration cannot secure to the worker sufficient increase of income to compensate for the ever-increasing cost of the necessaries of life—not by a long, long way. This is an absolute fact. No settlement under any conciliation board or arbitrator on any railway in the kingdom, not even when rushed by the stimulus accorded by the strike, has given increased wages sufficient to compensate for the increased cost of living.

But the companies have a very much more potent reason for pressing forward conciliation schemes than any yet given. Their strength

lies, and can only lie, in the weakness of the men, and the men are only weak when they are apathetic or split up into warring sections. I have already given sufficient indication of the men's increasing wakefulness to their own welfare, and a good deal has been done recently towards a complete unification of their forces. If this unification leads to a more general tendency to fight the companies it will be of lasting benefit, but if the men develop their conciliation schemes as well as unite into one big union, they are simply beating themselves. For, note this: The national union is to abolish sectionalism, but conciliation schemes develop sectionalism. They develop sectionalism by dividing the workers up first by railways and then by departments; further, they weaken the men by leaving many sections out altogether. By this means the companies are still able to fight them in detail and play off one set of men against another, just as they did with the sectional unions. Against this the evidence may be brought that the boards have

increased wages and, in some cases, reduced hours. Of course they have. But the strike was responsible for some activity in that direction, as a slight consideration of the settlement will show.

CHAPTER XII

OUR RAILWAY-RIDDEN GOVERNMENT

Railway rates—The Railways Bill—Its withdrawal—The Railways (No. 2) Bill—Government and companies in collusion—Amendments not admitted *by the companies*—How the Bill was engineered through Parliament—Mr. Lloyd George's dictum—Minimum wage for men refused—Railway dividends—Railway capital and "water"—Facilities to increase railway rates will increase cost of living.

WE have seen that the companies "speedily surrendered" and met the men's representatives when called upon to do so by the Government. One of the terms of reference when the Royal Commission was appointed explained why; it read: "The Government have given an assurance to the railway companies that they will propose to Parliament next session legislation providing that an increase in the cost of labour due to improvements of working conditions for the staff be a valid justification for a reasonable

general increase of charges within the legal maxima if challenged under the Act of 1894."

Throughout these pages I have shown—sometimes by accident—that the Government and the companies are as one party. Their fights are either sham fights to impress the ignorant, or they are the outcome of attempts to curb the zeal of the companies and prevent them from too flagrantly "giving the game away." How just this estimate is was revealed when the Government redeemed the above pledge.

On April 1st, 1912, Buxton presented a "Railways Bill" to the House of Commons. It was a comprehensive measure designed to increase the value of the companies' stocks and shares, but as it did not become law, I will not go into it in detail. The first portion of clause 8, however, is worth quoting, as it was evidently drawn up at the dictation of the Railway Companies Association. "Any railway companies may enter into agreements between themselves as to the maintenance and management of their respective

railways, the use and working of their railways, and the fixing, collecting, and apportionment of fares, rates, charges or other receipts taken in respect of traffic on their respective railways." That clause stood alone, and was not qualified by one word to safeguard the position of the employees !

On the 7th of November Mr. Asquith intimated that, in view of the pressure of other legislation, time could not be found for the passing of the Bill that session. A month later the Railways (No. 2) Bill was introduced. Instead of the nineteen clauses of the previous Bill, this measure only contained one important clause, which read as follows :

" Where, on a complaint with respect to any increase (within the maximum) of any rate or charge under section 1 of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1894, the railway company proves to the satisfaction of the Railway and Canal Commissioners—

" (*a*) That there has been a rise in the cost of working the railway resulting from improvements made by the company

since the nineteenth day of August, nineteen hundred and eleven, in the conditions of employment of their staff ; and

" (*b*) That the particular increase of rate or charge of which complaint is made is part of an increase made for the purpose of meeting the said rise in the cost of working ; and

" (*c*) That the increase of rates or charges made for the purpose of meeting the rise in the cost of working is not, in the whole, greater than is reasonably required for the purpose ; and

" (*d*) That the proportion of the increase of rates or charges allocated to the particular traffic with respect to which the complaint is made is not unreasonable,

the Commissioners shall treat the increase of rate or charge as justified."

After a somewhat stormy passage, represented by over 300 columns of Hansard, this Bill secured its third reading practically as intro-

duced. The only material amendment was one forced upon the Government by the traders' representatives, limiting the period of the operation of the measure to five years, though this amendment was subsequently struck out. But even a mild matter like this so incensed the railway magnates that the chairman of the Railway Companies Association, Sir George Armytage, attacked the Government, and, apparently losing his temper, made public certain secrets of the relations existing between the Government and the companies. He declared emphatically that the "terms of the Railways (No. 2) Bill were agreed between the Government and the railway companies before the Bill was introduced, and with one exception (that of the time limit), every amendment to it had been the subject of discussion between the Government and the railways." From the correspondence between Asquith and Armytage it was clear that several interviews had taken place between the two parties, the last two occasions being those of the 12th and

13th of February, when nine representatives of the companies were present. Asquith made some slight show of protestation against Armytage's version of the negotiations, asserting that the Government had resisted all amendments except the time limit, which, to the shame of the Government be it said, was true. Armytage retorted that his statements were strictly accurate and informed Asquith that the time limit amendment was "inadmissible." The outcome of all this was that the Lords deleted the amendment in question, and the Government shepherded the necessary majority into their lobby on the winding-up day of the session, March 7th, 1913. Thus the Bill was put through Parliament at the dictation of the railway directors. Imagine it ! The Government of the country, led by a Prime Minister who boasts of the tight grip that Parliament keeps on the railway companies, is not allowed to "admit" amendments to a Bill which so vitally affects the whole trade and commerce of the nation.

As evidence of the railway "pull" on

Parliament, it is interesting to note what took place in the House of Commons on January 30th, when the Bill came on for second reading. On the front Opposition bench sat Mr. C. B. Stuart-Wortley of the Great Central, immediately behind him was Sir Frederick Banbury of the Great Northern, behind Banbury sat Lord Claud Hamilton of the Great Eastern, amid a small crowd of other railway directors. In the little seat under the gallery sat Mr. Arthur B. Cane, barrister-at-law and secretary to the Railway Companies Association, in company with two other eminent members of the Parliamentary Bar, acting as railway counsel, and a solicitor of one of the leading companies. All these were present to give legal advice to the companies' representatives, the terms of whose speeches plainly indicated that they were there to fight, not as representatives of the people in the national forum, but as railway magnates, obviously interested in increasing railway profits. And not only did the companies' representatives have the help of legal advisers

to see that the Government did not break the promises it made when drafting the Bill, but other influential assistance was forthcoming at intervals. On different occasions Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Austen Chamberlain discussed matters with Stuart-Wortley and then disappeared behind the Speaker's chair. Presently Buxton was signalled for, and the three apparently decided what pressure was to be brought to bear upon mutinous members of the two parties. So completely was the Government in the hands of the companies that it was not even allowed to change the words " not unreasonable " to " reasonable." The representatives of the companies intimated that it would be a more difficult matter to prove that increased charges were " reasonable " than that they were " not unreasonable "! Lloyd George, who won the admiration of the public for " settling " the strike after Asquith had messed things up, contended that it was settled in the interest of the public and the public must be prepared to bear the burden. " We are simply giving the railway

companies a right which is now extended to every business man in the country. . . . Any other employer of labour could take all those charges into account. If there is a great settlement between colliery owners and their employees, or great cotton spinners, or in any other industry which involves a heavy increase in the labour bill, they pass it on, *and they are entitled to pass it on.*" (So now we know exactly where Lloyd George is.)

It will be noticed that there was nothing in the Bill to guarantee that the workers would receive a living wage when the companies had been granted facilities for raising rates. The Labour members and a few friends tried to remedy this. They moved two amendments, asking that the companies should be forced to pay a minimum wage to all their employees. The first was for 25*s.* a week, and when that was defeated a second was put forward asking for 21*s.* a week—to be defeated in turn. It was pointed out to the Government that if their honour demanded that the companies should have facilities for getting their pound

of flesh, then surely it would be equally honourable for them to demand that the companies should increase starvation wages to somewhere near subsistence level. It was, in effect, asking the Government and the companies to parade a virtue at the expense of the companies' clients.

In the course of the debate Lloyd George said : " This Bill is a Bill to redeem a definite pledge given by the Government of this country in a very grave crisis. It was a crisis which was grave, not merely from the point of view of trade, commerce and industry of the country, but there was a very grave international situation, and in endeavouring to settle we had to make an appeal, not merely on the first ground but on the latter ground as well, to the patriotism of all parties to make a real effort even if it involved real sacrifices, to put an end to what threatened to be a very dangerous internecine conflict in this country."

If Lloyd George had tried to be sarcastic at the expense of railway directors he could not

have been more successful. Patriotism! In spite of the fact that their sweated employees had beaten them, in spite of the fact that the whole country was suffering through their lordly notions on the question of trade-union recognition, and that the country was faced with the possibility of invasion, or, at any rate, attack, the railway directors could not muster up sufficient patriotism to stifle their temperamental desire to drive a bargain. They were asked "to make a real effort, even if it involved real sacrifices," to admit that they were in the wrong and that they would endeavour to put matters right, but finding that their exposure and defeat had incidentally put the country in a hole, they said: "We will be patriotic—at a price. Our sacrifice must result in ultimate gain." And the Government accepted this "sacrifice," this "patriotism," at the companies' valuation. The value of the men's patriotism, on the other hand, was not regarded by the Government as worth a semi-starvation minimum wage of a guinea a week, although the com-

panies were granted facilities to recover every penny of the expense incurred.

In short, the Liberal and Tory front benches, pressed by the thirty odd railway directors who are members of the House of Commons, and the forty odd railway directors who are members of the House of Lords, conspired with the companies to pass a measure guaranteeing railway dividends against the attacks of sweated labour. This in spite of the figures which prove that few railway workers' wages are sufficient to keep them in a state of comfort, that their hours are far too long, that the risks they continue to run should, in a truly civilised State, convict responsible railway officials and directors of murder, and lastly, that dividends have steadily risen during the whole period of the men's agitation.

When it is considered that Parliament has given the railways power to raise rates and fares in face of the last-named fact, I think every reader of these lines must agree that no condemnation of either companies or Government can be too strong. Take the

following figures. From 1907 to 1911 railway net profits increased from £43,486,526 to £48,581,746. If you point this out to anyone interested in railway shares their retort will be that, although 48½ millions seems a large sum, it only represents an average dividend of 3·67 per cent. on actual investments. But that is an unfair way of putting it. In actual fact it represents more than that, for dividend is paid yearly on capital which was never really in existence.

Railway capital in the United Kingdom in 1911 was just over 1,324 million pounds, but nearly 200 millions of this is nominal capital, or "water," as it is termed by our financial friends. That means it is not money, nor anything represented by money; nominal capital is just the polite term for a legal and therefore successful swindle. The best way to appreciate this is to compare the interest percentages. Thus:

	1909.	1910.	1911.
Average percentage of interest on *gross* capital	3·43	3·59	3·67
Average percentage of interest on *net* capital	4·04	4·22	4·32

There is the Taff Vale railway to illustrate the matter of nominal capital by an extreme case. At one time this "inefficient, dangerous and dirty affair," as Mr. L. G. Chiozza Money termed it, was paying dividends of about 15 or 16 per cent. It obtained the permission of Parliament to call each £100 of stock £250, thus reducing the rate of interest by a stroke of the pen to a moderate figure. And nearly all the big companies have utilised their power in the House of Commons to perform the same conjuring trick. The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, noted among railwaymen for its scandalous service conditions, had a total capital, including loan and debenture stock, on December 31st, 1911, of £70,348,806, but of this capital £11,473,288 was nominal. The Lancashire and Yorkshire railway workers are thus sweated to pay dividends, not merely on 59 millions or so actually invested, but also on over 11 millions of capital which never existed except in the accommodating imagination of a railway-ridden Government. To continue the Taff Vale story. At the end of

1911, out of a capital of £9,821,469 there was £3,754,135 worth of water. Or, if we take the ordinary share capital of £5,192,500, there was £3,214,500 water. On the ordinary shares 4 per cent. interest was paid. If we deduct the water and take only the actual capital invested, we find that the Taff Vale railwaymen in 1911 earned for the ordinary shareholders £207,700 on actual value of investments of £1,978,000. The real dividend on the ordinary shareholders' capital was thus about 10½ per cent. And just here let me remind the reader of the fact that the money originally invested in the railway is not all represented by tangible things. As we have already seen, it was not all sunk in providing engines, trucks, tracks, and the like. But no matter whether the cash went to a grasping landlord or corrupt politician, or a wily lawyer, or even if it was not cash at all, but merely "nominal" capital, railwaymen have had to earn a dividend on it every year, no matter how slight their own recompense has been.

And not only must they earn a regular

dividend, but Parliament now decrees that they must earn an increasing dividend. An approximate estimate gives the increase in railwaymen's wages as £1,500,000 per annum as a result of the strike and subsequent developments, whilst railway profits have increased over 10 per cent.—that is £5,095,474—from 1907 to 1911. Complete figures for 1912 are not yet published. As a set-off to the men's gain I must mention that the retail prices of 23 principal foodstuffs advanced another 5·6 per cent. from 1911 to 1912, and the purchasing power of a sovereign declined another 9*d*. Or to quote the paragraph appearing on page 77, bringing it up to date: The general level of retail prices in London of 23 principal foodstuffs advanced 21·7 per cent. from 1895 to 1912, or to restate the proposition in terms of cash, the purchasing power of a sovereign in general commodities in 1895 had declined to 16*s*. 3*d*. in 1912.

Railwaymen are looking forward to further increases as a result of the companies receiving power to increase rates. Traders will recoup

themselves by increasing the price of their commodities, and so railwaymen will have to pay out any increases they may receive in increased prices for commodities. So th e men—and the public—are in a cleft stick, and the obvious question that arises is : Where is it all going to end ?

CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUSION

Where will it end?—Demand for nationalisation—Monopoly inevitable—The Gladstone Act of 1844—Railway Nationalisation Society—Its proposed Bill—Terms of purchase—Useless railway directors—*Chambers's Journal* on superfluous officials—Objections to nationalisation—Our discredited Government cannot be trusted—A new proposal—Railwaymen to control the industry and the State to own it—The Nationalisation Society's Bill again—How to amend it—The National Guild of Railwaymen—Steps towards it—The Railway Clerks Association—How this will affect the proposed change—A practical proposal for ending the present railway scandal.

THE last chapter ended with the query: Where is it all going to end? The only remark one can make on the question with any certainty of being within measurable distance of the truth is that the people who should be thinking out a solution to the present problem, the people who "keep a tight grip on the railway industry," have not

the remotest idea. If they were forced to answer the question no doubt they would reply : " Railway nationalisation " ; but that isn ot by any means the end, it may be merely a fresh beginning. However, the demand for nationalisation is now so general that it is entering that region of strange and fearful adventure known as the realm of practical politics, and really there is no need to dwell much upon the subject.

Traders, railway employees, and that section of the public which is interested in and articulate upon social and industrial questions, are unanimous in demanding it. Even railway shareholders and directors are gradually coming to the conclusion that State monopoly is inevitable.

As we have already seen, the principle of competition has never had free play in the industry. To such an extent have the big companies stifled competition by absorbing or amalgamating with competing lines, that Parliament has repeatedly been forced to consider the problem of what we should call,

if we were speaking of America, the trustification of the railway system.

In 1909 a Departmental Committee was appointed to consider railway agreements and amalgamations, and in its report, issued on April 11th, 1911, occurred the following: "The effects of the limited degree of competition still existing between railway companies are not necessarily to the public advantage. And, having regard to the fact that much of the unnecessary burden which competition undoubtedly imposes upon the companies themselves is likely, in the long run, to be passed on in one form or another to the public, we cannot doubt that the balance of advantage, not only to the railway companies but also to the public, would be found to attach to a properly regulated extension of co-operation rather than to a revival of competition.

"Even had we come to a different conclusion with regard to the value of competition we should have been unable to suggest any means for its continuance. That the railway system is the creature of Parliament in a sense not

applicable to other industries, that it is regulated and limited by law in a manner different from other industries and undertakings, and that the control is, in the nature of the case, necessary to the larger interests of the country, is incontestable. But, while Parliament may exact that this must be done and that must be prohibited, past experience shows that even Parliament appears to be powerless to prevent two parties, either by agreement or without formal agreement, from abstaining from a course of action, namely active competition, which neither party desires to take.

"We have come to the further and unanimous conclusion that the natural lines of development of an improved and more economical railway system lie in the direction of more perfect understandings and co-operation between the various railway companies."

Thus it is admitted that competition between the companies is doomed, and that Parliament is powerless to prevent the development of a railway trust. As it is universally

admitted that private monopoly of such an important industry would practically place the country in the hands of the monopolists, the proper line of railway development is obviously the unification of the whole system and the transfer of railway property to the State.

As to the method of acquiring the railways, Mr. Gladstone's Act of 1844, giving the State power to acquire all railways constructed after that date, laid down a basis of purchase. This basis has been adopted by the Railway Nationalisation Society in drafting their proposed Bill to " nationalise the railways of the United Kingdom." With reference to terms of purchase the Bill reads :—

" The Minister for Posts and Railways shall have the power of giving three months' notice to purchase as a going concern the whole undertaking of any railway company in the United Kingdom.

" The purchase price to be paid to such company shall be twenty-five times the average annual profits during the three years preceding the date of the giving of the

aforesaid notice. The amount of such profits shall be determined by the figures given to the Board of Trade and published by it in its annual return relating to the railways of the United Kingdom.

" The railway company whose undertaking is purchased in accordance with the terms of this clause shall be paid out in Government railway stock at its face value, bearing interest at the rate of three and one quarter per cent. per annum."

In his excellent " Case for Railway Nationalisation," Mr. Emil Davies points out that there is another method of buying out the companies, and that is by paying the ordinary market price for the stocks and shares. So as to gain some idea of how this would work out, he took two large companies, the London and North Western and the Great Northern, and " calculated the valuation of their stocks based on the mean middle price between the highest and lowest touched each year during the five years, 1907—1911." He gives tables to show how his results are arrived at, and to

compare those results with the results of the 1844 Act terms. In the case of the London and North Western, stockholders, if bought out on what may be termed their own valuation—the market rate—would receive over £5,000,000 *less* than if they were paid twenty-five years' purchase of the average profits for the last three years. In the case of the Great Northern stockholders, they would receive about £500,000 more. Generally speaking, it would pay better to buy up railway stock at the market price than to buy it under the terms of the Gladstone Act.

If the whole of the railways of the United Kingdom were purchased on the 1844 Act terms at once, however, there would be an immediate profit of £8,817,000; this without considering one of the innumerable economies which would undoubtedly be effected.

Now, one of the arguments used—to the employee—against State ownership is that it would increase unemployment. Apart from the fact that the argument in itself condemns the present system of waste, it might be

pointed out that without nationalisation railway officials even now are continnally increasing unemployment. From 1907 to 1910 the number of employees decreased by 12,591, although there had been a great increase in the volume of traffic dealt with, and the profit of the companies increased by nearly four million pounds.

In their evidence before the departmental committee of 1909, the railway officials had to admit that amalgamations and working agreements already lead to a displacement of labour. "The advantage to the shareholders," said one of them, "could only be economy, and the principal item of economy must be labour." So that this "economy of labour" is now taking place. Men are being dispensed with in the name of economy, whilst others are still being overworked and underpaid. The same thing, taking it at its worst, could only happen under State ownership.

No one will deny that a unified system must abolish certain posts, but it will be noticed that all the concern expressed is for the poorly-

paid clerk and manual worker. Why is it that the human ornaments are never mentioned in this connection? There are the 1,400 or so railway directors, costing the industry an immense sum of money and all of whom could be dispensed with. In the early part of last year a railway article appeared in the *Investors' Summary* in which the writer stated: "Turning to the directors, what do we find? Three thousand gentlemen—university-bred, courtly, honest, but gilt-edged amateurs in railway work; pillars of the Carlton and other aristocratic clubs; guardsmen, sportsmen, scions of ducal houses, naval officers. Now, in what country but dear old England would the control of a vast organisation of national importance be confided to such mediæval personages? Many of the directors are very old men, with an obstinate, feudal kink in their brains, who regard their men as so many industrial vassals, needing what they regard as 'wholesome discipline.'" Whilst of the other officials the following extract from an article which appeared in *Chambers's Journal*

of April, 1906, is eloquent: "Railways suffer from a superfluity of officers. A man obtains a leading position in the administration and, when vacancies occur, his sons, nephews and other relatives fill them. A chief retires, and a new one takes his place and introduces *his* relatives, and so things go on from generation to generation. The vested interests at such centres as Euston, for example, would appal an outsider were he to examine the salaries list and see how frequently the same favoured surnames occur. The directors who appoint the staff frequently have to provide places for their protégés, so that a good number of people are appointed, not because they possess aptitude for the position, but because they happen to have influence among the directors, whom, of course, the shareholders pay. A chief officer on a line running to the north was recently retired on full pay so that his position might be given to a protégé of an athletic friend of an athletic son of the chairman." But we never hear of these men being concerned when staffs are reduced.

We never hear of these gentlemen being inconvenienced, for a very good reason—for the same reason that they occupy their present position—they have "influence," and they have influence because they move in a certain circle, and, under present circumstances, the substitution of Government officials for the present rulers of the railway world would leave them in the same sphere of influence, and jobs would still be created for them. In short, Government is so discredited to-day that no man would knowingly trust such an important industry as that of transportation to the benevolent despotism of present-day State bureaucrats. The Railways (No. 2) Bill, outlined in the last chapter, effectively ruined any lingering trust that we might have held in the good intentions of Parliament. If that Bill was not passed on purpose to enable the companies to pile up profits during the next few years so that, when the time for nationalisation comes, the companies will benefit to the tune of some scores of millions of pounds—twenty-five times the amount of

the additional profits, be it remembered—well, I defy anyone to state what the actual reason was.

Nationalisation is therefore well on the way, but there is this danger: The rulers of the country will not adopt nationalisation because they are convinced that it would be just, or wise, or more effective than the present system, but because they see no chance of continuing the present railway régime without causing greater troubles than they have yet experienced. For this reason when they apply, or partly apply, the Socialist theory to any industry, they do it in such a way that it is always partly or wholly discredited. Not very long ago the ordinary Socialist believed that the mere transfer of productive and distributive machinery from the hands of private individuals to those of the Government would bring in the millennium. Nowadays the ordinary Socialists try to explain their mistake away (I do it myself on occasion) by claiming that they never believed that Socialism without a nation of Socialists would be of

any benefit. The nation of Socialists certainly is the ideal, but some move must be made in the meantime And just as the malcontents had to develop the theory of Socialism and educate the people in its principles, whilst the masters and the politicians denounced them as dangers to the State—until the politicians were driven by the sheer logic of events to adopt the theory—so will the malcontents have to hammer out other schemes for enabling society to continue functioning as well as may be whilst the people are being fully educated in the principles of national co-operation.

Not that this means that I am against nationalisation. I believe in nationalisation. I think the railways ought to be nationalised at once before the companies run up their dividend lists to absurd heights, as they most certainly will do. But I am opposed to the mere transfer of railways to Mr. Postmaster-General or Mr. President of the Board of Trade. I want to see railway labour past the period of begging Government officials to have pity upon its misery, and place itself

in such a position that it can have a voice in the appointment of officials who will act as its servants instead of usurping the position of labour taskmasters.

To this end, apart from nationalisation, there are a number of proposals. There is Syndicalism, Labour Co-partnership and its cousin, that truckler to the devil, Profit-Sharing, all of which are unsatisfactory. The only proposition I know of, which offers a reasonable chance of success, is that put forward and elaborated in the columns of the *New Age* under the title of Guild Socialism. And even this scheme is in its entirety too ideal to be entertained at present. It does, however, give some indication of the lines of a solution. The Guild Socialist proposes that the whole of the labour required for railway working should be organised into one guild. The ownership of the railways should be vested in the State and the guild would be responsible for the carrying on of the industry. Or, in other words, the labour monopoly now in existence should be organised so that its

executive force could trade direct with the nation for the supply of that which it would have for sale, the labour of its units.

That is a broad, and perhaps a vague, general outline, but it will do for a base. As I have already stated, it is too big for present achievement, but it could very well be partly applied in conjunction with the present scheme of the Railway Nationalisation Society, whose proposed Bill I have introduced. Under the heading of "Management" this Bill reads:

"The actual management of the railway system for the time being in the possession of or under the operation of the State shall be vested in the Railway Commissioners, who shall be under the control, as hereinafter set forth, of the Postmaster-General, thence-forward designated the Minister for Posts and Railways.

"The Railway Commissioners shall be appointed as follows:

By the Minister for Posts and Railways .	2
By the Board of Trade	1
By the Treasury	1

"These four Commissioners shall nominate a fifth to act as Chairman. Two of the Commissioners shall be persons of experience in railway management, and the Minister for Posts and Railways shall have power, if he thinks fit, to appoint two additional Commissioners.

"The Railway Commissioners shall retire at the end of every five years and may be re-appointed. On the expiry of the first five years and on the expiry of future quinquennial periods the Railway Commissioners shall be elected by the Railway Council hereinafter mentioned, but such appointments must be ratified by the Minister for Posts and Railways.

"The Railway Commissioners shall be required to give the whole of their time to their duties, and shall be paid for their services."

Besides the Minister and the Commissioners the Bill proposes a Railway Council.

"There shall be constituted a Railway Council, the members of which shall be appointed as follows :

By each County Council whose area is wholly or partly served by railways owned or operated by the State	2
By each County Borough Council whose area is wholly or partly served by railways owned or operated by the State . .	1
By the Associated Chambers of Commerce.	6
By the Associated Chambers of Agriculture	6
By the Trade Union Congress . . .	12

"The duties of the Railway Council shall be to consider all questions of general improvements, reductions or increases of rates and fares, wages, etc., the creation and amendment of bye-laws and regulations, and its decision shall be binding upon the Railway Commissioners, provided, however, that such decisions are ratified by the Minister for Posts and Railways."

Which is all very well, but it leaves too much power in the hands of the Minister, and labour only comes in as a tag at the end. If this seems captious criticism, let me remind the reader of the speech by Lord Derby, then Lord Stanley, Postmaster-General, in the House of Commons in 1905. The postal servants had been agitating for higher wages—

some of the postmen actually wanted more than a guinea a week!—and in commenting upon the agitation, Lord Stanley stated that "means should be devised by which there should not be this continual bloodsucking on the part of the public servants." If the postman's effort to increase a wage of a guinea a week is bloodsucking, what will the Postmaster-General, when he has become Minister of Posts and Railways, have to say to the guard who asks for an advance on 25*s.* or 28*s.* a week?

Instead of the Commissioners appointed by the Board of Trade and the Treasury, there should be two appointed by the Railwaymen's Guild—we have had too much Board of Trade in the past—and on the Railway Council 50 per cent. of the representatives should also be appointed by the Guild. The Trade Union Congress is not representative enough of railwaymen's interests, and twelve is an insufficient number.

The objections to this will be that the unions are at present too narrow and sectionalised,

that even if they were fused into one huge organisation they would not have the necessary knowledge for the control or partial control of the industry, and further, that put in such a position of power their demands would be too extravagant. There is, I believe, an answer to all of them.

On February 14th of this year three of the four railwaymen's unions involved in the 1911 strike fused into one big union, the National Union of Railwaymen. The other union, the A.S.L.E. & F., will certainly drop its sectional attitude in the near future and join the larger body. This will only leave the Railway Clerks' Association out, and there is already a demand among members of that body for fusion with the N.U.R.

Special attention must be paid to the clerks' organisation. Although it has not taken up any aggressive attitude towards the companies, no other union has more relentlessly exposed their scandalous treatment of their employees. The clear and comprehensive way in which railway business is dissected and laid before

its members in the monthly journal, the *Railway Clerk*, is admirable, and from the point of view of organisation and administration the R.C.A. is one of the finest unions of the day.

The chief point to my case, however, is that it caters not merely for the clerks, but also for station-masters and what might be termed clerical and working officials. Now, if the real working official and station-master combine with the working staff, the whole of the men whose work really counts can be rapidly recruited into a railwaymen's guild. Another point to note is that the stronger the union becomes, the easier it is to persuade non-unionists to join. The first two objections to the partial control of the railway industry by the employees will thus be overcome. As for the third, that the demands of labour will be too extravagant, no one who realises how generally fair-minded the workers are will be troubled about that. Indeed, what most of us who know them fear is that their infernal modesty will prevent them from demanding

more than one half of that to which they are justly entitled.

My proposal is certainly not an ideal one, but it has the merit of being practicable, and that is what the case now demands : A scheme which will give some measure of justice to railwaymen, which will break down the present conspiracy between the companies and Parliament, and which will prevent the companies from proceeding with the schemes of robbery outlined in and legalised by that scandalous measure known as the Railway (No. 2) Bill.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES
THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

JAN 15 1948

RECEIVED
MAIN LOAN DESK
LD-URL MAR 4 1985
APR 22 1985
A.M. 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6 P.M.
REC'D LD-URL
OCT 1 1985
OCT 03 1985

REC'D LD-URL
DEC 28 1987
DEC 12 1987

Form L-9
20m-1,'42(8519)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES

3 1158 01030 7782

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
AA 001 032 860 7